

PLUCK AND LUCK

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STORIES OF ADVENTURE.

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Price 5 Cents.

THE WILD BULL OF KERRY

—OR—
A BATTLE FOR LIFE.

BY ALLYN DRAPER.



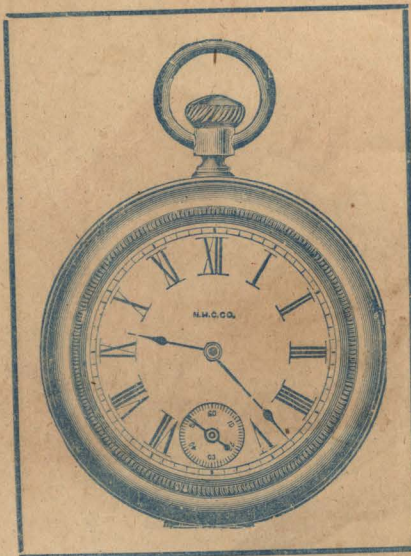
The wild fellow set up a peculiar yell of defiance as he turned on the white horse and shook a huge club at the corporal and three more of the patrol.

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CHAPTER I.

WAS HE A MAN OR A DEMON.

The cruel work of eviction was going on in Ireland, and the poor people throughout the land were fearfully excited and incensed at seeing their fellow beings driven on the roads, to perish with cold and hunger.

On the wild hills of rugged Kerry the mounted patrols of soldiers and police scoured the highways in quest of outlaws who defied the laws of the alien landlords.

Every mountaineer was a rebel at heart and in act, and their mothers, wives and daughters had reason to share with them in their hatred of foreign law.

Travelers visiting the far-famed lakes of Killarney, who have ventured upon the mountains in the neighborhood, may have often noticed the pretty, bare-footed girls on the roadsides who dispose of goat's milk and potheen to thirsty souls sojourning thereby.

On a certain evening in the fall of the year a young girl of this class was returning to her mother's hut with a good supply of the mountain productions still undisposed of, when she perceived a party of six of the mounted patrol galloping down the road toward her.

Uttering a slight cry of alarm, the girl placed her pail on her head and attempted to climb up the rugged mountainside, but the place was too steep for even one of the nimble goats of the region, and the soldiers were on the road behind her before she could advance twenty steps in the rough path.

Pulling up their well-trained horses, the corporal of the flying patrol called out to her in impatient tones:

"Come down here, lass, and let us see what you have in the pail."

The girl did return slowly toward the roadside, as she replied:

"It is only goat's milk, sir."

"Will you swear there's nothing else mixed with it?"

As the corporal spoke he winked at the others, and continued in a low voice:

"I'll bet you we're in for free drinks from the lass."

"I don't like to swear at all, soldier," answered the girl; "and if you don't take my word for it, go your way, and leave me go mine in peace."

"Not till we taste the milk first," cried the corporal, springing from his horse and striding toward the girl.

The active creature made an effort to dart past him and the others, but she was encumbered with the heavy pail on her head, and her tormentor caught her around the waist and held her back, as he roughly cried:

"You can't go till we all get a drink of the precious milk, my dear, and you will get paid for it."

"Take it all without pay, bad cess to you for an impudent rogue!"

As the girl spoke she tipped her pretty head in a peculiar way, and over on the saucy fellow went the full contents of the pail.

A roar of laughter burst from the others, as they saw the white fluid drenching their comrade from head to foot, while the girl balanced the empty vessel on her head again and darted up the road, as she cried, in merry tones:

"How do you like the taste, soldier, and much good may it do you?"

Sputtering some of the milk from his mouth and some ugly words at the same time, the fellow darted up the steep road after the girl, as he cried:

"There's whisky in the milk that never paid duty, and I'll be even with you for that trick, my bold lass."

The girl kept on the race, laughing merrily, as she responded:

"Ye're welcome to it, duty or no duty, soldier, and may it help to whiten yer heart as well as yer coat."

Still bursting with laughter, the others walked their horses up the hill to watch the race, as one of them yelled out:

"Go it, Robin, and I'll wager you win the race, lad."

"A shilling on the dark mare," cried another, "and the lass is overweighted with the pail at that."

"The white horse for my money," yelled a third. "We'll have to call him Robin Whitefellow hereafter. Ah, the lass is down!"

The active young girl did trip and fall at the moment, the pail flying from her head away in front of her.

"I have you now, pert lass," yelled the corporal, with a shout of exultation as he dashed at the girl just as she had regained her feet.

The fellow's rough hand was on the arm of the strong mountain lass, and he was in the act of passing an arm around her waist, when she turned suddenly and dealt him a blow between the eyes that sent him staggering to the earth, while she cried:

"Take that, ye Sassenach thief, and larn to keep yer dirty hands off yer betters hereafter."

The girl then darted up again at full speed, picking the empty pail up in her flight and placing it on her head again.

Another shout of laughter burst from the soldiers below as their comrade fell to the ground, and one of them yelled:

"She's a stunner with her mawlies as well as her feet. Haven't you got enough yet, Robin?"

Robin did not appear to have enough of the punishment, as he regained his feet and darted up in pursuit again, while he yelled out:

"Blow my eyes, stout lass, but I'll pay you for all in another bout, or my name is not Robin Wildfellow."

"'Tis Blackheart yer name ought to be, the way ye act to a poor girl," cried the fugitive, as she sprang into a small cottage or shebeen on the roadside, closing the door after her.

The angry corporal thundered at the door with his feet and hands, yelling:

"Open the door, girl, or we'll burn the place over your head. I'll take you before the magistrate and make charges against you, you confounded Irish jade."

There was no answer from within.

The other soldiers drew up some distance back from the cottage, as if either ashamed of taking part in the outrage or desirous of seeing the corporal fighting the affair out on his own hook.

"If you don't open," yelled the corporal, flinging his whole weight against the door, "I'll have you punished all the more for resisting the law."

Before he could receive a reply a strange-looking black object darted down from the rocks near the side of the cabin and made at the ruthless fellow without uttering a word.

A warning cry burst from his comrades as the black object rushed at Robin, but the soldier had not time to draw his short sword ere his furious assailant was on him.

Uttering a cry like unto that of an enraged bull, the strange being seized the soldier around the waist, raised him up as if he had been a babe, and tossed him up in the air with tremendous force.

A yell of terror burst from the soldiers as they saw their helpless comrade falling to the ground headforemost, while his black assailant darted up the rugged rocks again, sending forth his bellowing cries.

Three of the men fired their rifles at the strange object, but he escaped without injury, and disappeared in one of the deep ravines above.

The hapless corporal lay perfectly motionless when his comrades dismounted and hastened to his assistance, while one of them cried out:

"Was it a man or demon, lads? It is all up with Robin."

"I saw its horns," cried another, "and it looked like a black bull."

"It was a black bull," cried another, "for didn't we hear him roar? Blow my eyes if the Irish rebels ain't training their

very cows and bulls to fight against us. How is it with Robin?"

At that moment an Irish jaunting-car rattled down the road, and as the driver pulled up in front of the cabin two young men sprang off the side seats, while the driver cried:

"Holy Moses, gentlemen, but ye are in luck this evening. It is worth a five-poun' note apiece from ye to get a peep at the Wild Bull of Kerry, and no mistake."

"Are either of you a doctor, sirs?" asked one of the soldiers.

One of the young men bent down over the insensible corporal and proceeded to examine him, as he remarked:

"I know a little about medicine. If the man isn't dead, he ought to be, as that was the blamest toss I ever saw in my life. He has a thick skull, and he is only stunned."

"Maybe a little of this will bring the poor fellow to, gentlemen," said the mountain lass, as she appeared at the door of the cabin holding a small jug in her hand. "It is spirits."

The amateur doctor looked at the girl in some surprise, as he asked:

"Are you not the young person this soldier stopped down below there?"

"'Twas me, sir: but sure he had no right to trate me so."

"I should say not. Yet you now offer whisky to revive him. Jot that down in your cranium, Spenser."

"'Tis down, old fellow," replied the other young traveler; "but what has become of the soldier's wild assailant?"

Spenser addressed the soldiers when he asked the question, but their only reply was to stare up at the rugged rocks, while the driver of the car burst forth into a hearty laugh, crying:

"Ha, ha, ha! Faith, but it would be hard to tell where the Wild Bull is now, gentlemen."

"Do you know the fellow, cabby?" asked one of the soldiers.

"Not me, be jokus, barring what report says of him."

"Is he a man or a demon?" continued the soldier.

"Faith, but he must be a little of both, from what people say of him. The lad here is coming to now, but I'll warrant you he'll never forget the Wild Bull of Kerry as long as he lives."

CHAPTER II.

ANOTHER GLIMPSE AT THE WILD BULL.

While the unlucky soldier is recovering his senses we will say a few words about the travelers and the driver who had appeared on the scene.

The driver of the jaunting-car was Mat Haley, of Killarney, a celebrated character in his own line.

It was said of him that he could tell more wonderful stories to his customers than any other man in Ireland, more especially when they happened to be English tourists and snobs.

Mat was a good driver; he was clever with his whip or his fists in a ruction; and it was whispered that he was hand in glove with all the boys who "were up for the green and down with the red" on the hills of Kerry.

He was specially partial to his American customers, as he had a great veneration for the great land of the west, and no man so much that he found them more liberal than the English snobs.

The travelers there under his special care represented the two countries, and they were both connected with the press.

Mortimer Spenser was a Cockney reporter, sent over by the leading English journal to report the troubles in Kerry, and his companion was Percy Green from New York, and the foreign correspondent of one of the brightest newspapers in the city.

While the droll Irish driver would be telling a wonder

story to the Englishman during their travels, he would keep winking to the American and remark to him every once and a while in a side whisper:

"If you swallow half I tell you as the truth, sur, it will be enough."

Mat had been telling them some wonderful stories concerning the Wild Bull of Kerry, all of which had been swallowed by the English reporter.

Percy Green, on the other hand, did not believe in the existence of the wild being at all, although he had heard other rumors of his exploits in the hotel at Killarney.

After witnessing the startling scene near the shebeen, each of the young reporters was most anxious to see and hear more of the extraordinary person who had so readily punished the offensive soldier.

The shebeen was a small tavern in its way, and Percy Green invited all present to partake of some refreshments therein, the corporal having soon fully recovered his senses, and not his full animal spirits.

Robin Wildfellow was a stout, able man of medium age and height, and he was regarded by his comrades as a keen fellow, who could plot and fight his way through the world with the best of them.

As the reporters were simply traveling in public as tourists, even Mat Haley did not suspect that they were taking notes for publication, if necessary.

The corporal regarded the strangers with some suspicion, however, as he felt that he had not borne a very manly part in the late incidents; while he was burning to get even with the young girl and the wild being who had assaulted him, without exposing himself to censure at the hands of his officers.

Robin was certain of the silence and the aid of his own fellows in carrying out any scheme of vengeance, but he felt that he had to be cautious before the strangers.

When the proposal for refreshments had been made by the young American, the young girl and her mother received their visitors in the shebeen as if nothing out of the way had occurred outside.

Percy Green noticed that the woman seemed to be a person of appearance, speech and manner far above the ordinary peasant dwelling on the mountain, and when he took a good glance at the young girl's form and face he said to himself:

"I'm blamed if she isn't a beauty in the rough. Rig her up in good trim, and she would pass muster anywhere."

While Percy Green used splendid language in his articles, he had a rough way of expressing himself at times.

The corporal also took a good look at the girl, and he muttered to himself.

"She is a stunning lass, and hang my eyes if I let her off easy."

Having tossed off two drinks of the "mountain dew," Robin Wildfellow addressed the woman of the house in bluff tones, saying:

"Is this your daughter, and what is your name, woman?"

"That is my daughter, sir," was the prompt reply, "and my name is Mrs. O'Leary. May I ask your name and rank?"

"That's no business of yours, woman. Who was the savage ruffian who tried to murder me out there a while ago?"

"That is more than I can tell you," was the curt reply.

"I'll make you tell me, or I'll take you and your daughter into jail for harboring savage assassins."

The woman shrugged her shoulders as she carelessly replied:

"It wouldn't be the first time I was in jail on a false charge."

"Then get ready and march with us now, the pair of you," cried the corporal, becoming more incensed at the woman's tone and manner. "I'll be sworn this is a vile rebel den, anyhow."

At that juncture Percy Green interposed in pleasant tones, saying:

"See here, corporal, ain't you going too far with the joke? This woman or her daughter have not committed——"

"Mind your own business, whoever you are, sir," cried the angry corporal, "or I'll take you and your friend also. I believe you are one of those infernal Yankee suspects, anyhow, hang you."

"Oh, see here, my good fellow," said Spenser, with a knowing smile, "you musn't insult us, you know, or you will get into a bad box. Just take one look at this paper and draw in your horns."

The corporal did take a look at the paper thus presented, and he did "draw in his horns" on the instant.

It was a regular passport from the English general commanding in the district, giving free permission to the bearer to go where he pleased.

The angry corporal then glanced at the American as he asked, in more civil tones:

"Have you a like order, sir?"

"You will see when you take me before your general or a magistrate," was Percy Green's curt reply.

"Put that in your pipe and shmoke it," said Mat Haley, as he winked at the young girl.

"I'll break your jaw, cabby, if you give me any of your impertinence," cried the corporal, turning on the driver.

"Begor, one would suppose ye had enough of jaw-breaking for one evening, me big bully; but if ye're panting for more, I'll try a tussle with ye," said Mat, moving toward the door. "If Nellie here is able for ye, I'd cry if I wasn't."

The corporal was about to make a rush out at the driver, when a cry of alarm outside attracted the attention of all, and out sprang the men from the shebeen.

The cause of the alarm was startling enough, even for the reporters.

The two soldiers who had been left outside in turn to guard the six horses of the troop were stretched on the ground, and five of the animals were prancing and kicking around in wild disorder.

"The Wild Bull is at one of his old tricks," cried Mat Haley. "Watch him making off with the white horse, gentlemen."

The strange-looking being was galloping up the mountain road at full speed, being mounted on the fleetest and best horse of the patrol.

"The infernal savage is stealing my horse," yelled Corporal Wildfellow, as he sprang for one of the other steeds. "Mount, lads, and after the Irish demon."

The wild fellow above set up a peculiar yell of defiance as he turned on the white horse and shook a huge club at the corporal and three more of the patrol who had hastened to mount for the chase, while the driver turned to Percy Green and whispered:

"Maybe you'll believe in the Wild Bull of Kerry now, sir. That is one of his old tricks, for 'tis many a good horse he has borrowed from the sogers or peelers by some such caper as that."

"I do believe in him, Mat, and you must tell me more about him," answered Percy, who was watching the wild horseman until he disappeared on the top of the mountain.

Spenser had darted up the mountain in his eagerness to observe the outcome of the singular affair, and the driver drew the American aside, as he replied:

"I will and welcome, sur, if you'll promise to keep it to yourself."

"On my honor I will, Mat."

"'Tisn't much saycrets I can tell you about him, sur, but put yer questions and I will answer them as well as I can."

"Then who and what is that man?"

"It is hard to say, sur, but it is fully supposed that he is one

of the unfortunates who was driven from house and home by England's cruel laws, and that he is touched in the head by misfortune."

"But does no one know who he really is?"

"That I couldn't say, sur. If they do they keep his secret well. Whenever he appears suddenly to the sogers or the peelers he's got on that black bull's hide, with the short horns sticking out, as you saw, and nothing to be seen of his face but the glaring eyes and the great black beard."

"Does he work alone against the soldiers?"

"Most generally, sur; but it is also said that he appears now and again at the head of a band of the brave lads who like to strike terror into the hearts of the tyrants around Kerry."

"From what I saw," said Percy, "he must be very strong, active and fearless."

"He has the strength of two powerful men, sur, and his courage and activity can't be equaled at all, either. Besides, it is said he bears a charmed life, as no bullet or steel was ever known to touch him, although 'tis many a warm tussle he had with our enemies."

"See here, Mat, I must see and know more of this wonderful character, but not to do him any injury. Put me on his track and I will make it worth your while."

Mat Haley rubbed his head for a moment, and then replied:

"I'm afeared, sur, I'd be only getting ye into trouble."

"In what way, Mat?"

"Be lading ye into bad company and ugly dangers to boot."

"Nonsense, man. I'm not a blower, but I like excitement. Do what I require and I'll guarantee that I will be true to your friends of the mountain, while you will not waste your time."

"I am certain you are a true man, sir, and I will take you at your word; but how are we to get rid of the Saxon chap?"

"I'll fix that. What is the programme?"

"Jump into the car, sur, and we'll after the chase up the mountain."

CHAPTER III.

THE WILD BULL IN FLIGHT AND IN FIGHT.

The evening light was still shining fairly when Corporal Wildfellow and the others dashed up the mountain top in pursuit of the Wild Bull.

The corporal knew that his white horse could outstrip the others in a race, but he hoped that the wild fugitive would soon be cut off by some of the other flying detachments scouting around.

The soldiers bore their short rifles in the pursuit, but while their bullets could reach the wild man, they did not care to fire at him, fearing to slay the valuable horse he was stealing.

Over the mountain top and then down on the other side went the chase, the Wild Bull not urging the white horse to his fastest gait, for some purpose of his own.

On reaching the top of the mountain two of the soldiers fired their rifles, in order to give the alarm to another party stationed at a hamlet two miles below.

On reaching the descent on the other side the two soldiers fired their weapons again, and then the corporal sent up a shout of joy as the response to the signals came up on the evening air.

Pressing on his own horse to the fullest speed, he yelled to the others:

"We've cornered the brute now, but don't fire on him till you are certain of your aim, as I would not have Snowball hit for all the world."

The four men sent up a shout of triumph when they saw

another mounted party riding up the hill to head off the wild fugitive, while the Wild Bull gave a yell, denoting that he was not at all alarmed by the surroundings.

On reaching a rugged spot about half a mile down the mountain, the wild fellow turned the white horse suddenly to the right and faced him up a narrow path through the rocks, as he yelled:

"Come on with you, redcoats, and take the horse and me, if you can!"

The corporal and his friends were not more than three hundred yards from him at the moment, while those below were ascending at a rapid gallop.

Robin Wildfellow unslung his rifle and dashed up the rugged path before the others, as he cried aloud:

"Don't fire until we are close on the savage, and spare the horse. Where in the mischief has the fiend gone to?"

As the corporal asked the question he brought his horse to a dead halt before a huge rock that blocked the path effectually, as it was over twenty feet high.

The sides of the path were also very high, and as the astonished corporal stared around for the fugitive he cried:

"He must have been a demon, as Snowball or any other horse could never leap up out of this trap with him."

"There must be a secret opening through that rock in front, corporal," suggested one of his comrades.

"Let you search for it on foot, then, and be on your guard against the savage, while I will keep mounted. Here come the others now."

The other flying patrol, numbering twelve men in charge of a sergeant, soon appeared on the scene, and the corporal made a hurried report about the outlaw.

Every effort was then made to discover the hiding-place of the strange being and the white steed, but without the slightest success on the part of the baffled soldiers.

It was quite dark when the search was given up by the stronger party from below, while Wildfellow and his three friends lingered near the short path, hoping for the reappearance of the strange being and the white horse that was prized so much.

"I'd give six months of my pay," said Robin, with a groan, "to get my hands on that savage, or my gun leveled at him at fifty yards."

The words were scarcely uttered when a dark figure on a coal-black steed dashed out at them on the road from the path, while the wild man with the horns cried:

"Here's your chance without the loss of a penny, you brute of an Englishman."

Before the four startled soldiers could bring their weapons to bear on the furious creature he was in among them on the black horse, and dealing tremendous blows with his club to the right and to the left.

Robin Wildfellow was the first to fall before him, and his three companions also went down on the ground before they could retaliate in any form.

Having thus disposed of his enemies, and leaving the half-stunned soldiers on the roadside, the wild man dashed up the mountain on the fiery black steed, as he fiercely yelled back:

"Another good horse for the good cause, and down went the invaders."

Over the mountain top and down again toward the shebeen the wild man rode at full gallop, the black horse gliding along with the speed of a greyhound, while the strange being kept muttering to himself:

"The stranger should be here to-night if he comes at all."

On nearing a point some five hundred yards from the cottage, the horseman drew up on hearing a signal from above, and then down from behind a hiding-place sprang the young girl, as she joyously cried:

"Well done again, sir. My blessings on you for flooring that villain."

The strange man's voice was as gentle as that of the young girl's as he replied:

"That was nothing, Nellie. Who is below at the house now?"

"A young gentleman from America that came recommended by Mat Haley, sir."

"Indeed! Was he one of those stopping there when I rode away?"

"He was, sir. Mat drove the other one and the two wounded soldiers to the town, and the gent below stayed behind, pretending that he was awfully sick entirely, which isn't the truth at all."

"Has he been asking about me?"

"A power, sir. He says he'd give his eyes to have a talk with you."

"He must have it, Nellie. See to the horse and warn the lookouts. I expect you'll have more Saxon visitors to-night."

"Bad cess to the same visitors, sir; and goodness send we'll soon be rid of them forever. Will you go in as you are?"

"Certainly, my girl."

At that very moment Percy Green was seated in the shebeen conversing with Mrs. O'Leary on very friendly terms.

"And you think he may turn up here to-night, ma'am?" asked the visitor.

"It is hard to say, sir. If he was sure you were a friend when he rode away on the corporal's horse, it is likely he would make an effort to come."

"I trust he may, as I have come some distance to see the Wild Bull of Kerry."

"And what do you want to see him for, young sir?" asked the gruff voice, as the uncouth individual in his full disguise suddenly appeared before the young reporter from America.

Percy Green was surprised at the sudden appearance of the strange figure, but he arose with a smile and a bow as he answered in free and fearless tones:

"I wish to pay my respects to a brave man, perhaps, or I may desire to write a column or two about you."

"What is your name, sir?" asked the Wild Bull, somewhat abruptly.

"Percy Green, at your service."

"What is your business here?"

"I am a writer for the American press, in search of information in Ireland."

"Is that your only business here at the present time, sir?"

"If you had a right to ask I may answer you," was the fearless reply from the young American, given in civil tones.

"I may have the right, sir, if I please to use it. Well, have you anything in particular to say to me to-night?"

"I may if we were alone on the top of some mountain," answered the young American, with a meaning smile.

"Fancy we are on Mangerton, as we are alone here now."

The young American gave one glance around, and seeing they were alone in the room, he bent forward to the uncouth head and whispered a few words into the strange being's ear.

The moment they were uttered the Wild Bull grasped Percy by the hand in the warmest manner, and kind and gentle were the tones of his voice as he said:

"You are welcome to Kerry, sir, and to the lair of the Wild Bull. Now——"

The speech was interrupted by a signal from without; and then Nellie ran into the cabin in alarm, crying:

"The Saxon rogues are riding this way from above and below, sir. Make haste out or they will be on you in a jiffy."

"I thought we'd see them soon again to-night," said the strange man in calm tones. "Nellie, this young gentleman was too sick to move, you know. Can you play your part, sir?"

"I hope so, friend," replied Percy with a confident smile.

Nellie closed and bolted the door as she warned the Wild Bull, saying:

"They are almost at the door, sir. For Heaven's sake be off. I'll tend to the sick young gentleman, never fear."

CHAPTER IV.

HUNTING THE WILD BULL.

Percy Green was astonished to see how easy the strange being before him took the matter when the mounted patrols rushed toward the shebeen from the right and from the left.

The moment the young girl had bolted the door she hastened to form a bed on a rough sofa at one side of the room, her mother assisting in the task, as she said to the rude being before her:

"For goodness' sake hasten back before they burst in the door. If you are caught here, what will become of us?"

The strange man was quietly listening at the door at the moment, and the appeal seemed to rouse him to action, as he turned on the instant, saying:

"They are coming in force, but don't you fear them, ma'am. Stretch yourself, young man, and play your part so as to spare yourself and our friends here from all suspicion, and leave the rest to me."

Percy nodded his head in approval as he stretched himself on the rude sofa, and the hunted man disappeared by the back door at the same moment.

The young girl and her mother took seats near the sick man, and the former remarked to him, with a pleasant smile:

"Wouldn't a little warm water and salt help to make you sicker, sir?"

"No, thank you. A little more of the goat's milk and whisky would be better, I think," answered Percy, putting on a languid expression.

Nellie was in the act of handing him a cup of the mixture, when a loud knock at the door announced the arrival of the unwelcome visitors.

Mrs. O'Leary went to the door on the instant, as she cried aloud:

"Who's there?"

"Open, in the name of the law," answered a stern voice. "We seek the sick young man who is stopping here for the night. Hasten."

"'Tis General Buller himself," whispered Percy to the girl. "Now we will have to play our cards well, you can bet."

The fearless girl nodded in approval, while her mother opened the door, saying:

"Come in, sir."

A resolute-looking man of middle age, wearing a military cap and cloak, entered the cabin, followed by an orderly and Mortimer Spenser, the English reporter.

Percy Green attempted to rise and salute the famous English general, who recently arrived in Ireland for the purpose of "tranquillizing" the distracted country, but he fell back again as if in great pain, as he groaned forth:

"I beg your pardon, General Buller, but my head is splitting."

The general glanced at the woman and the girl before he fixed his eyes on the young invalid, and asked:

"What is the trouble, sir?"

"A fearful headache, general, and a staggering dizziness as well."

"Were you so ill that you could not ride in to the hotel, sir?"

"The shaking of that confounded car almost drove me mad, and I thought it best to rough it out here for the night."

General Buller fixed his eyes on the woman as he asked:

"What do you know of the savage rascal who attacked the soldiers this evening, woman?"

"Nothing at all, sir," was the quiet reply, "more than any one else living up here along the mountainside."

Buller then turned abruptly on Percy Green as he asked:

"Was not the man here lately, sir?"

"Can't say, general. There were three or four peasants in here a short time ago and he may have been one of them, for all I can say. I suppose you allude to the outlaw known as the Wild Bull of Kerry?"

"I do, sir; and we are on his track now. He has been traced to this neighborhood, and I feel assured he is hiding around here."

"You are welcome to search for him about here as much as you like, sir," said the woman of the house.

General Buller fixed his sharp eyes on the woman again, as he said:

"I believe you harbor the rebel, woman, and I warn you. You have not always lived up here, I may imagine."

"That I did not, sir. One short year ago I had a happy home down in the valley, but it is a ruin now. As to having rebels here, I must tell you that I never refuse food or drink to any poor wayfarer who comes along, if I have anything to give. All the laws of England cannot compel me to turn against my own fellow creatures."

"Search the place, soldiers," cried the English general, "and keep a strict watch outside. Woman, I will have to place a guard over your house, as I can see that you are a rebel and a bitter one."

Mrs. O'Leary folded her arms, and looked at the English general with scornful eyes, as she proudly replied:

"My husband and my only son died for Ireland, and I glory in being a rebel like them, sir. Drag me to prison, if you will, but a rebel I'll live and die, while there's a foreign tyrant ruling in our land."

General Buller turned away with a shrug of contempt, as he said:

"Pshaw! I didn't come here to make war on women. Look for the wild outlaw, soldiers. Search in every hole and corner and place, and be on your guard against any sudden assault."

He was then turning toward the door when a wild yell fell on his ears, and out he dashed, crying:

"That must be the savage rascal."

Percy Green sprang from the couch at the same moment, and he was about to rush out after the English general when Nellie O'Leary whispered to him:

"Don't forget that you are sick, sir."

"I must see what is going on outside if I were dying, my dear girl. Please let me lean on you," replied the young rogue, as he staggered to the door.

"Of course, sir; but don't lean too heavy, as I am not very strong," answered Nellie, as she supported Percy while he walked out of the cottage.

"What's the alarm?" cried General Buller, as he sprang out on the road, where over fifty horsemen were drawn up.

Pointing to the rough rocks running up from the cottage, the officer replied:

"The savage fellow just appeared up there, general, and shouted down his defiance to us. Will we up at him?"

The general was about to reply, when the Wild Bull suddenly appeared on the rocks above, mounted on the coal-black steed, and waving a flaming torch in his right hand, as he yelled:

"After me if you dare, you English hirelings! Who will be brave enough to follow the Wild Bull to his lair?"

Over fifty rifles were aimed at the horse and his rider on the instant, but General Buller raised his hand, as he cried aloud: "Don't fire on the mad fool! Pursue him and take him alive!"

The wild man held his ground on a large rock as he yelled back:

"Come on and take me! There's not a rider among you who dare to follow my black steed or face me man to man!"

Several of the horsemen attempted to dash up the steep mountainside, but they were all soon compelled to scramble back to the road again, five of the animals rolling with the riders over the mountainside in the vain effort to gain the rock.

"Dismount and pursue him!" cried the general, leading the way up the rocks; "but do not fire on him until I give the order."

"I'm with you in the Wild Bull hunt, general," cried the English reporter, as he crawled up after the soldiers. "The promises to be rare sport."

Percy Green burst from Nellie and ran up after his rival, crying:

"I must be in at the death, if I had to die for it."

Several of the dismounted soldiers rushed up at the same time, while the Wild Bull kept his place on the huge rock and flourished the flaming torch in defiance, as he yelled down:

"Come on, and I will lead you a fine chase, you English dogs."

As the defiant man uttered the last words he cast the burning brand down at his pursuers and then disappeared behind the huge rock on the black steed.

The torch grazed General Buller's head and struck Mr. Spenser on the breast with some force.

The English reporter uttered a fearful yell as he fell backward against a soldier, and they both rolled down the steep side together, upsetting those they encountered in their unwilling retreat.

Percy Green witnessed the undignified retreat of his professional rival as he was scrambling up near General Buller, and he roared with laughter ere he cried:

"The Wild Bull has put my friend from London out of the race."

"I thought you were so very sick, Mr. Green?" dryly remarked the general, as he scrambled up with much exertion.

"Can't afford to give way to it now, general. I must report this novel chase in full, you know. Here we are on the top of the rocks, but where is our wild game? There he goes with the horse!"

The young American reporter and the general were the first to reach the top of the huge rock on which the wild horseman had been defying them, and on casting their eyes over the rugged and rock-studded plain beyond they could see him riding along at a lope, as if leisurely picking his pathway.

Some of the soldiers gained the rock as the young American spoke, and General Buller dashed on, crying:

"After the rascal as fast as you can, as he cannot gallop his horse on that rough ground. Don't fire at him until I give the order. Forward!"

The general was a very active man, and he dashed along the very rough ground at full speed, while Percy Green kept on at his side, crying:

"A horse—a horse! My kingdom for a horse at this moment."

"You have splendid lungs for an invalid," said Buller, with a dry cough, "and the mountain air seems to revive you in a wonderful manner."

"By Jove, general, I fancy it was the last nip of mountain dew they gave me, as I feel as fresh as a daisy now," responded the young rogue. "There he goes behind that huge bowlder. The savage is as bold as brass."

Before riding behind the huge rock in question the Wild Bull turned toward his pursuers, and cried out:

"Follow me still, and you will have all the fun you want."

General Buller pushed on at his best speed, as he cried:

"Beware of an ambush, soldiers, and look to your arms."

Percy Green pushed on close behind the general, as he asked himself:

"What in thunder can the man be driving at, leading us on a wild chase as this? Hallo, he has disappeared again, Jove!"

The last words were uttered aloud as they reached the side of the huge rock and came to a halt.

General Buller looked carefully around, but he could not catch a glimpse of the fugitive or his horse, and he cried aloud:

"Come out of your lurking-place and surrender, you rascal. Surround the rock, men, and fire on him if he attempts to ride it. Make a thorough search for the savage."

The huge rock was soon surrounded on all sides, while several of the soldiers hastened to search for the outlaw in the large fissures along the sides.

Percy Green kept close to the general, and the latter remarked:

"There must be a secret hiding-place beneath the rock. I will have it blown up in the morning with dynamite."

The reporter looked up at the huge mass of rock as he responded:

"That would be a blow-up, indeed, general. May I ask you if you have any idea of who the savage creature may be?"

"Some desperate rascal who was evicted from his farm, I presume, or he may be one of those wild characters from the backwoods of America. Whoever he is, I will soon tame him or slay him."

General Buller then turned his sharp eyes on the young man, as he continued:

"It occurs to me, sir, that you know more about this mysterious person than I do."

"Why do you imagine so, general? What can I know about him?"

"You had an object in remaining at that cottage to-night, and the attraction there could not have been that peasant girl, though she is very pretty indeed."

The ready-witted reporter burst out laughing as he rejoined:

"You are altogether too sharp for me, general. I had an object in remaining at the cottage to-night, and that object was to interview the Wild Bull of Kerry."

"Did you succeed, sir?"

"I did not, I am sorry to say. The people in the cottage ignored all knowledge of the man, and they would not, or could not, give me any hint as to where I may meet him."

General Buller pondered some moments, and he then said:

"Do you propose to return and remain at the cottage to-night, sir?"

"That will depend on your success in this hunt, general. If you succeed in capturing the man, I will be well enough to accompany you to town. If you do not, I fear that I will be too weak for the journey."

"I understand you, sir. The hunt is now over, and we will return."

And General Buller turned away to draw off his men, while the young American said to himself:

"The old fellow is deep, and he is now working some cunning dodge; but I'll cut my throat if he catches the Wild Bull without my aid. Not much, Mr. Buller!"

Percy Green would have given a good deal to linger behind the retreat of the soldiers from the huge rock, but he was compelled to accompany them back to the cottage or incur the suspicions of the keen-eyed English general.

On reaching the road, the order to mount was given, and then General Buller addressed Percy Green, saying:

"I trust you will be fortunate enough to gain an interview with your Irish friend in the bull's hide to-night."

The young reporter was about to make a merry reply, when a wild yell burst on their ears from the rocks above.

Casting their eyes up to the rock on the instant, they all beheld the savage-looking figure on the black horse, and he was waving a blazing torch as before, while he yelled down in defiant tones:

"Farewell for a while, General Buller, but we will meet again."

"Take aim—fire!" cried the English general. "We'll take the rascal, dead or alive. Too late!"

The volley rang out just as the man and the horse disappeared from the rock, and the echo had scarcely died out over the mountain when the voice of the Wild Bull was heard again, crying:

"False hearts, false aim. You will never slay the Wild Bull on his native hills, foreign tyrants."

CHAPTER V.

PRANKS IN THE VALLEY.

Three nights after the hunt for the Wild Bull four men were seated around a table in the mansion house of one of the most unpopular landlords in all Ireland.

The house was situated in a pleasant valley about four miles from the town of Killarney, and it was surrounded by beautiful orchards, gardens, lawns and parks.

"And so you would advise me to take my daughter to England, general?" said Claude Dalbert, the owner of the mansion, a stubborn-looking man of forty-five, with a grim smile at the others.

"That is my advice," replied General Buller. "From the information I have received, I cannot think that Primrose Hall will be a safe residence for you hereafter."

"But I have twenty-five policemen here at present, and they——"

"Will be no safeguard as against the infuriated people who are now homeless by your orders, sir," interrupted the English general. "What do you say, Mr. Green?"

"I must agree with you, general," answered the young reporter. "Mr. Dalbert's late tenants are fearfully incensed against him, but I cannot imagine that they would injure the young lady."

General Buller shrugged his shoulders ere he returned:

"They will strike at him through those he cares most about, if I am not much mistaken. Just imagine Miss Dalbert in the power of your savage friend up on the mountain, sir."

"My savage friend of the mountain, general, from what I could judge of him by our interview that night, would not molest the young lady, I feel certain."

"But he threatens Mr. Dalbert to strike at him soon and sudden. Did he tell you of his plans, Mr. Green?"

The young reporter spoke in somewhat dignified tones as he replied:

"I have told you, General Buller, that my conversation with the strange man, after you retreated from the cottage on the mountain that night, was of a general nature. He admitted that he was an Irish outlaw, that he was opposed to the foreign landlord rule in Ireland, and that he would continue to make war on all those who evicted their tenants with the aid of the police and the soldiers."

"And as I come under that class," said Dalbert, with a stubborn scowl, "I may soon expect to see the savage fellow attempting some of his pranks on me."

"Egad, but I hope he'll pay us a visit here to-night," said the Cockney reporter, who was the fourth person present, "as

Percy here stole a march on me the other night up on the mountain. Why didn't you write him up, old fellow?"

The landlord placed a hand on a repeating rifle lying on the table as he exclaimed in loud, blustering tones:

"I wish the wild beast would come here to-night, and I don't think he'd ever trouble us again. I am ready for him."

At that moment a thrilling scream was heard in the hall outside, and the four men sprang to their feet, the master of the house seizing his weapon.

Another instant and the door was flung open, while a hoarse voice cried out:

"Here I am to deal with you as you deserve, Claude Dalbert."

"The Wild Bull, by Jove!" cried Mortimer Spenser, drawing back.

"He has my daughter, the brute!" exclaimed Dalbert. "Hands off, you——"

The savage-looking man, fully arrayed in his novel costume, was standing at the door holding a fainting girl in his arms, as he interrupted her father, crying:

"I sent you word that I would soon strike at you, Claude Dalbert, and here I am. I will keep your daughter as a hostage. Justice to your tenants, or death to the girl! I defy you all!"

Three of the men sprang forward as if to seize the wild intruder, but he drew the door after him with a bang and rushed through the hall, crying:

"Justice or death! If you would rescue your daughter, tyrant, follow me to the mountain. I defy all your hirelings!"

Claude Dalbert opened the door as fast as he could and ran out into the hall with the rifle in his hands, yelling:

"Seize the robber and rescue my dear girl. Treachery! Where are the officers?"

As the wild man closed the door General Buller sprang to one of the windows, and fired his revolver, crying:

"On the alert out there, men. Guard all the doors and strike down the savage rascal who bears the young lady in his arms. 'Tis the Wild Bull!"

A fearful commotion then ensued in the mansion, as the landlord and his guests, with the armed policemen and male servants, all rushed here and there in search of the daring outlaw who had seized the young lady and disappeared with her.

Every entrance to the mansion was soon guarded by four or five armed men, while mounted policemen rode to and fro along the paths outside, as if to cut off the retreat of the extraordinary man.

Claude Dalbert rushed here and there as he called on his daughter and the outlaw in frantic and angry tones, intermingled with fearful threats against the latter.

The storm raged in the mansion for over half an hour, during which time the frantic search was kept up inside the building as well as in the stables and other outhouses, but they could not find a single trace of the wild outlaw or the young girl he had seized.

When the four men were assembled in the sitting-room again, General Buller said:

"He must be concealed in the house, Mr. Dalbert, as it was not possible for him to get out with the young lady."

The frantic father shook his head and clenched his hands as he responded:

"But where can the beast be hiding with my daughter? I am certain he has taken her life. Oh, for my vengeance!"

"Do not fear that he will take the young lady's life, sir," said Percy Green, in confident tones. "From what I have heard, he has never sought to shed the blood of the innocent, or even to take the lives of those hunting him down. Is not that the fact, General Buller?"

"He has treated the police and some of my men to very rough blows, but I have not heard of any lives being lost by his hands," replied the general. "The affair beats all I ever

heard of. How could he enter the house, surrounded as it has been by the watchful police patrols?"

"Egad, he must have come down one of the large chimneys from a balloon," suggested the Cockney reporter, "and then made off with the young lady in the same way."

"That's a good point for you, old fellow," said Percy Green. "General Buller, I ask your permission to ride up to the mountain as soon as possible."

"With what object, sir?"

"I wish to seek another interview with the extraordinary outlaw."

"With a view of rescuing the young lady, I hope, sir?"

"That is my sole object, general."

"But how is it possible for him to reach the mountain, or even leave this mansion with the young lady, sir?"

As if in answer to the question a loud shout was heard on the lawn at the moment, followed by two shots from a rifle, while a voice was crying:

"There he goes on the horse with the young lady. Fire at the horse!"

General Buller sprang to the window on the instant, and yelled aloud:

"Don't fire again, men, if he has the young lady. Pursue him. Out with my horse!"

The young girl's father dashed out of the room and down the stairs, still holding the rifle in his nervous grasp, as he yelled aloud in piercing tones:

"Slay the wild beast and rescue my daughter. A thousand pounds to the man who will save her and kill the infernal rascal. Bring out a horse."

The two reporters also sprang to a window, and when the Cockney looked out on the lawn he exclaimed:

"Goodness gracious! Hang me if the fellow hasn't the young lady on that big black steed of his! Egad! he is not in haste to get away, either."

It was a clear moonlight night, and those standing at the window could witness the strange scene going on in the grounds in front of the mansion.

The Wild Bull was dashing to and fro on the lawn on his powerful black horse, holding the young lady in his arms and shouting defiance to the mounted policemen who were riding after him.

Although the path to the highway appeared to be clear before him, he did not turn the horse in that direction, but kept him on a swift gallop hither and thither, as if thoroughly despising his pursuers.

"What in the mischief can he mean, I'd like to know?" muttered Percy Green, aloud, as he watched the hunt with eager eyes. "He must be crazy, indeed!"

"He's the wildest of all wild Irishmen, by George!" returned the Cockney reporter. "I say, old fellow, let us to horse and join in the hunt."

"Yes, yes—let us down to the stables, as he must soon be off."

When the two young men reached the stableyard General Buller and Mr. Dalbert were in the act of mounting two fleet horses, and the former cried:

"The men are saddling other horses, gentlemen. Mount and come with us, and you will have some news to-night."

Mounting in hot haste, the two eager reporters dashed out on the lawn after the general, as the Cockney cried:

"There he goes for the park now, and see how he holds the young lady as he rides."

The Wild Bull had faced his horse toward a small deer park on the right of the lawn, and as he dashed along he turned in his saddle, holding the young lady in his arms, as he cried:

"Fire if you like, and hit the young lady. Justice must be done!"

"Hold your fire," yelled General Buller, as he spurred on in pursuit.

"Save my daughter, and don't risk a single shot," cried Claude Dalbert, as he spurred on in a furious manner. "We will soon run the fiend down, as his horse is carrying double. Push on, and ride for life and death."

All the pursuers did urge on their horses to their fullest speed, while on through the park before them dashed the wild rider with his fair prize, the black steed keeping his distance with apparent ease.

General Buller and the landlord were mounted on the fastest hunters in the stables, and they soon swept out together ahead of the mounted police, yet they did not seem to gain an inch on the reckless rider in front.

On through the park, over the stone wall, and then out on the highroad swept the Wild Bull and his prisoner, while the anxious father cried out:

"The fiend is making for one of his hiding-places on the mountain! Oh, who will save my dear girl?"

"Push on—push on!" cried the dashing soldier. "The fellow is wheeling down into the valley now."

"He is making for the river! Oh, mercy! The madman will plunge in with my girl, and she is lost!"

The Wild Bull faced the black horse over a high wall at the moment, and then dashed across a broad meadow toward a swift running and deep river, as he yelled back defiantly:

"Come on, Claude Dalbert, and take your girl if you can. Justice to the people or death to all your race!"

"Stay, stay, friend!" yelled Dalbert, as he saw the black horse facing right down to the river bank. "Spare my daughter, and I will——"

"Too late, too late!" yelled the Wild Bull, as he clasped the fainting girl closer in his arms. "You did not heed my warnings. In we go!"

The black steed sprang from the bank into the rushing water, while the agonized father drew up, crying:

"She is lost! Oh, do not spare that savage now, general!"

The dashing soldier did not pull up on gaining the bank of the river, but urged his horse forward, as he cried aloud to those behind:

"In after them, brave men, and save the young lady at all hazards!"

Percy Green reached the spot in time to hear the appeal, and struck his horse with a riding-whip as he cried:

"I am with you, general!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE WILD MAN AND THE MAIDEN.

When General Buller dashed into the river, the Wild Bull and the maiden were half way across the narrow river, the swift current bearing them downward as the black horse was headed for the opposite bank by his rude master.

The plunge into the cold water aroused the fainting girl, but when she opened her eyes and found herself clasped in the arms of the rude being in the bull's hide, another terrible beam burst from her, and she gasped forth:

"Oh, don't kill me!"

The wild man chuckled to himself in a peculiar manner, and then replied in the most gentle tones:

"Indeed, I will not harm you, young lady. Cling to me, or you may be swept down over the falls."

The young girl stared at the rough man with the smooth face as she exclaimed, in great astonishment:

"Oh, who are you, and where are we? I know your voice, think, but——"

"Hush, and cling to me, Miss Blanche," interrupted the strange being, "you are safe with me, but keep quiet."

They were nearing the opposite bank at the moment, and

the Wild Bull cast his eyes back at his pursuers, as he muttered:

"Five of them bold enough to plunge in after us, and the others making for the bridge below. Buller is a gallant fellow, but his horse is not fleet enough for Black Dan. Up with you now, my brave fellow. That's it."

With a splendid effort, the noble horse gained the bank with its double load, and the bold rider then turned his face toward the river as he cried:

"It is vain to pursue us, general. Let Dalbert do justice and the girl is safe."

Without waiting for a reply, the Wild Bull turned his horse and galloped away toward a dense wood, while he addressed the young girl in changed tones, saying:

"We will soon gain a safe shelter, Miss Blanche. Do you fear me now?"

"Not so much, as I think I know you. But what can you mean——"

"I simply mean to bring your father to his senses," interrupted the strange man. "He is acting like a mad tyrant with his tenants, and he must be tamed or destroyed. Who is this after us?"

The wild man looked back as they gained the edge of the wood, and he saw a single rider galloping along in close pursuit, yelling aloud the while.

"It is the young American," muttered the wild man aloud, "and the others must have been carried down."

"My father is lost, then?" gasped the young girl, with a shudder.

"Your father did not venture into the river, and the others who did can land in the meadow below. Miss Blanche, I am not eager to lead men to death."

"Indeed, I know that, if you are the person I think you are," said the young girl, in earnest tones.

"Admitting that I am that person, my dear girl, can you keep my secret?"

"Oh, yes, until death! But why do you put on such a horrid disguise, my good, noble, suffering——"

"Hush—hush, Blanche! There may be ears listening in the wood. I must now deal with the young fellow behind."

"But you will not injure Mr. Green?"

"Not I, as he is a good fellow in his way, and he is an American. In a few moments we will gallop to a shelter."

They were galloping along through a patch in the woods, and Percy Green was close behind them at the moment.

Pulling up suddenly, the Wild Bull turned his horse and hailed the young American reporter, crying in hoarse tones:

"What do you seek, sir?"

Percy Green drew up within a few yards of him as he replied:

"The young lady, of course. What in the mischief do you mean by taking her off in that manner, crazy man?"

The young man addressed the stranger as if dealing with a lunatic who required a certain amount of humoring, and he did not make the least pretense to a former acquaintance with him.

Blanche Dalbert was about to address the young man, when the Wild Bull placed his rough hand on her mouth, saying:

"Whether I am crazy or not, I can take care of myself and the young lady also. If you are wise, you will ride back to your friends, and tell Mr. Dalbert that she is safe for the present."

"But I must take the young lady back with me," protested Percy. "Come, now, my good fellow, whoever you are, you are going too far with the joke."

"You may go too far, sir. Ride back and mind your own business."

So saying, the strange man wheeled his horse again and galloped away at full speed, while Blanche cried:

"Don't worry about me, Mr. Green, as the Wild Bull will not injure me."

Percy Green did not attempt further pursuit, but rubbed his head as if puzzled, while he muttered aloud:

"Confound it all if I know what to make of his game now. It is evident he wants to give me the shake. Well, he is dealing the cards, and I suppose I must wait my turn. Back we go!"

The young man turned his horse and rode back at a slow pace.

Just as he reached the edge of the wood General Buller and Claude Dalbert rode up, with a dozen mounted policemen, the former crying:

"Where is the Wild Bull, sir?"

"I cannot tell you, general. I lost them in the wood in here."

"Forward through the wood, men!" cried the general. "We will soon have a force here strong enough to surround the daring savage. Keep heart, Mr. Dalbert."

A groan burst from Dalbert as he rode into the wood with the general, and Percy Green followed them, muttering:

"I must see the thing out, I suppose; but hang me if I know what he means by taking off the girl. He could get at Dalbert in some other way. Is it possible that she has recognized him?"

The wild rider dashed on through the woods clasping the young girl in his arms, while she smiled up at his uncouth face, as she playfully remarked:

"You remind me of Herne the Hunter, sir, in the Windsor Forest. Will we hide in some great oak tree?"

"You will see, Blanche. I must blindfold you for a short time. Don't be frightened, as you know I would not harm you."

"But why must you blindfold me, sir, as you can trust me?"

"I know it, my dear; but I do not want you to tell lies when you are asked about my hiding-place hereafter, and I wish to keep it a strict secret."

"Very well, sir. I will have no fear while in your hands, but, indeed, I am shaking with the wet and cold."

"You will soon be in a warm bed, my sweet child. How old are you now?"

"I will be eighteen at Christmas, sir."

"Dear me," said the outlaw, with a weary sigh, "how the years roll by!"

"And where have you been for three long years past, sir? We were told that you died away in America."

"So I am dead to all the world, Blanche. My real name is known only to you and three others. You will keep my secret?"

"Oh, yes, yes. But you will take your proper place again, sir? I could never believe you guilty of that horrid crime."

"Thank you, my dear. I fear I will never appear in the world again, save as you now see me. I was not guilty of that horrid crime, but I fear that I can never prove my innocence to the world. Now I will place this handkerchief over your eyes."

While still riding at a gallop, the mysterious man blindfolded the willing prisoner in the gentlest manner, while he playfully remarked:

"You remember when we played blind man's buff together, Blanche?"

"Oh, yes, indeed; but we are playing the Beauty and the Beast now. It is terrible to think that you are now an outlaw, with ever so many people hunting you down. Oh, do fly the country before the soldiers shoot you or hang you."

A scornful laugh burst from the disguised man, ere he replied:

"I can't fly at present, my dear girl, even if death threatens me at every step. I am here for a good object, and I must remain in Ireland until it is accomplished."

"But I cannot conceive why you should be one of the leaders of the wicked moonlighters, sir," protested the young girl.

"You only know the moonlighters through lying English reports, my girl. The moonlighters are men who have been treated in the most cruel manner; but we will not speak on such subjects. Are you happy at Primrose Hall with your father?"

"I am happy enough, sir, but I am sure that he is not."

"Why do you say so?"

"Because I know that he is fearfully worried about the estate. Besides, I am certain he has something preying on his mind. He fully believes you dead."

"He must continue to believe so, my sweet girl. Now, I will bear you into my palace and to a friend."

Blanche soon found herself borne along in the arms of the strong man, and she could tell that he was walking on a hard pavement or floor, as she said:

"This must be a castle, sir, as I can feel that you are in a great hallway of some kind, but it is pitch dark."

"One moment, and you will have light enough, my dear girl. Here you are."

The wild man placed the young girl on her feet before a blazing fire, removing the bandage from her eyes almost at the same moment, as he continued:

"Now, look around you and see if you know any one present."

Blanche did look around the small but well-furnished apartment in which she found herself, and as her eyes fell on the form of a young girl she sprang toward her with extended hands, crying:

"Why, dear Nellie, it is you!"

Nellie O'Leary received the young girl in her open arms as she replied:

"Welcome, welcome, Miss Blanche. But you are all wet. Come with me and put on some of my clothes. Dear me!"

The Wild Bull was watching the pair, his glaring eyes beaming with pleasure, when Blanche turned to him, saying:

"Is this one of the persons who knows your secret, sir?"

"To be sure, Blanche. In fact, Nellie is my secret adviser. But she will not tell you where we are now."

"I only care to know that you are safe here from your enemies, sir," replied Blanche, with a smile and a sigh.

"Don't fear for him, Miss Blanche," said Nellie, "as all the police or soldiers in Ireland could not find him here. Come with me now, my darling."

Blanche was leaving the room with her friend, when she turned once more to the Wild Bull and said:

"When we return, I hope to see you without that horrid disguise, sir."

"Perhaps," replied the outlaw. "Hasten and change your clothes."

When Blanche returned to the little apartment with Nellie about a half an hour later, she found a large man, with a great black beard, seated before the fire.

The young girl drew back with an exclamation of alarm, and then stared at the stranger for a few moments ere she said:

"It is not possible that you are——"

"Hush, Blanche, and never mention my name even in a whisper," warned the stranger, in his soft, mellow tones. "I will be known to you as Mr. Allman."

The young girl continued to stare at the bearded man as she replied:

"On my honor, sir, I would not know you were it not for your voice. Oh, you are so much altered! I do not believe that even father would know you."

"So much the better, as I may have to meet him as I am now."

"But your voice, sir? He will be certain to know you, if you speak to him as you do to me."

"It is not probable, Blanche," said the man, in altered and

hoarse tones, while an ugly scowl darted from his great black eyes. "Your father is not my friend."

"Oh, sir, I fear that he has been your bitter enemy, but for my sake you will not injure him. Will you?"

"He must act with justice to the people, my girl. You must excuse me, if I say that he is a stubborn tyrant, and he must be brought to his senses. But let us talk on other subjects. You know the young American who is known as Percy Green?"

"Oh, yes, sir. He has been my father's guest for the last two days."

"How do you like him?"

Blanche blushed a little, and held down her head as she replied:

"He seems to be a nice gentleman, but I don't quite understand him. Who and what is he?"

The bearded stranger gave a peculiar smile as he replied:

"I don't think he quite understands himself at times, but he is a good youth and very clever. What do you think of Mr. Percy Green, Nellie?"

The pretty girl of the mountain gave a merry laugh ere she replied:

"I think he'd make a fine play-actor, sir, only he wouldn't do for very serious parts, as he's so full of fun."

As if for the purpose of changing the subject, Blanche asked the stranger:

"Pray, sir, what are you going to do with me, now that I am a prisoner?"

"My dear girl, I have two objects in bringing you here. In the first place, I want to teach your father a lesson and compel him to do justice to his unfortunate tenants. You will not fear to remain here with Nellie for some days?"

"Not I, sir, if I could only let father know that I am safe."

"You can send him a note and I will have it delivered; but you must be careful to write words that will induce him to act with a little more humanity to his fellow-beings."

"You may be sure I will. What was your other motive for bringing me to this strange place, sir?"

"To get you a husband," was the answer of the bearded man, almost in abrupt tones. "Blanche, if you wish to save your father from destruction you must marry the man I mention."

Both girls stared at the mysterious man in surprise, while Blanche said:

"You are certainly jesting, sir. I am not to be disposed of—"

A hasty step was heard in the hall outside at the moment, and the stranger sprang toward the door, laying his hand on a revolver as he cried, in his hoarse tones:

"Who goes there?"

The door was flung open on the instant, and Percy Green entered the apartment, and faced the bearded man with a fearless front, as he replied:

"A friend or a foe, sir, according as I am received."

The bearded man had his weapon pointed at the reporter, and his voice rang out in his sharpest tones as he demanded, his great eyes flashing fire:

"Are you alone, sir, or have you betrayed me to my enemies?"

"I am alone. I am not a traitor, but I will have to demand the release of that young lady at once."

"And if I refuse your demand, Mr. Green, what then?"

"I will look on you as a brute and an enemy, and treat you as such."

The bearded man placed his revolver in his pocket, and turned to Blanche with a shrug of the shoulders, as he said, in his gentle tones:

"Do you look on me as a brute, Miss Blanche Dalbert?"

"Indeed, I do not, sir; but the young gentleman does not understand."

"Then we will have a prompt understanding at once. Mr. Green, you do not know my true object in bringing the young lady here, I presume?"

"I do not, sir; and I must say that I regard your mad act as a great outrage on the young lady, whatever cause of grievance you may have against her father."

"Well, I will tell you my reason for bringing the young lady here. I wish to see her happily married, and to the man she cares for. If I had not borne her away to-night she would have been forced to marry a person she despises."

Blanche and the others started on hearing the assertion, and Percy Green then asked, in agitated tones:

"May we know the name of the person who aspires to the young lady's hand, sir?"

"You may. He is now known as Mortimer Spenser, a London reporter; but his real title is Lord Longdale, a wealthy landholder in England, but one of the greatest rascals in London."

A cry of terror escaped from Blanche as she heard the announcement, and she then gasped forth:

"Oh, if it is that infamous lord in disguise, save me from him at any cost. I fear him, and I hate him."

CHAPTER VII.

THE WILD BULL'S PROPOSITION.

Taking the distressed young girl by the hand in the kindest manner possible, the strange man said:

"It was to save you from the rascal that I brought you here to-night, dear young lady. Is it not true that your father requested you to marry the man so odious to you?"

"It is, sir."

"Did he not speak to you on the subject in the park this afternoon?"

"That is also true, sir; but he did not tell me that this Mr. Mortimer Spenser was Lord Longdale. How could you know so much?"

"I am surprised if Mortimer Spenser should turn out to be Lord Longdale, sir," said Percy Green. "I have known him for a month or so, and I should have sworn that he was a reporter on the press. It is amazing to me."

"You are now reporting for the press, Mr. Green, but you bear another character as well. Did you ever meet Lord Longdale in his proper form?"

"Can't say that I did, sir," replied Percy, reflecting a little. "Why should he take such a strange whim?"

"It is not a whim on his part, but a deep-laid plot," replied the bearded man. "He has written for the press for years, and he writes well, but always with an object in view."

"Will you be kind enough to tell us his present object, as I take it that he is a deep one if he is Lord Longdale?"

"He is a deep one, and he has two objects in view at present in his disguise. He desires to bring odium on the people around here and to marry this young lady."

"Oh, sir," said Blanche, "can you tell us why my father desires me so much to marry this man?"

"I can, Blanche. Lord Longdale has your father in his power, and he wants to become the owner of his estate here at the lowest figure. You can understand that if the price of the estate is lowered by lying reports in the English press about the people here, this double-faced lord will step in and buy it for almost nothing."

"But is father compelled to sell his estate at a ruinous price, sir?"

"He is, my dear, if you do not wed this man you hate."

"Oh, horror! How can that be?"

"It is not necessary for you to know the particulars, but

your father owes Lord Longdale a large amount of money. Besides, he could ruin him by exposing a dreadful secret."

"Oh, dear, dear," sighed Blanche, "this is dreadful news. What am I to do to save father and myself? I would prefer death to marrying that wicked wretch!"

"Then marry a man who is not so wicked," said the bearded man, with a very grim smile at Percy Green.

"Oh, sir, how can you joke on such a serious subject?" asked Blanche.

"On my honor, I was not joking, young lady. Supposing I should show you a way out of all your trouble by marrying a young man whom you do not hate, to say the least, would it be such a dreadful proposition? Now answer me."

The young girl cast a sly glance at Percy Green and blushed deeply as she held down her head, while Nellie O'Leary cried in very merry tones:

"Oh, wouldn't I jump at such an offer if I was you, Miss Blanche. If she refuses, would I do as well, sir?"

Nellie winked at Percy Green as she asked the question, and the young man said:

"I'd be willing to marry the ugliest old maid in Ireland to save Blanche here from any trouble."

The blushing girl looked earnestly at the bearded man as she said:

"I'd like to know the name of the young man, sir?"

"He has several names, but he is now known to you as Mr. Percy Green."

"Yes, yes, Miss Blanche," cried the young man, as he seized the young girl's hand, "be my wife and I will swear to love you always as I do now, and save you from all trouble."

"Here is the case in few words," said the bearded man.

"Mr. Green here is rich, and he cares for you very much, Blanche. When your father is forced to sell the estates, your husband will buy it at a fair price."

"That I will," said Percy, "as I came to Ireland to look after some land as well as a wife. I saw you at a ball in London last winter, Miss Blanche, and I——"

"But the dreadful secret held over my father by Lord Longdale?" interposed Blanche. "He will be certain to expose it if I refuse him."

"He will not," said the bearded man, "if you follow my advice."

"Then you advise me to marry Mr. Green here, sir?"

"I do, and as soon as possible. Then you will go to your father with your husband, and leave the rest to us."

"Am I to tell father, sir?"

"Of course. Tell your father that Mr. Green is your husband, and that he rescued you from the Wild Bull of Kerry. Leave the rest to us."

Before Blanche could reply, the strange man turned to Percy Green, saying, in his gruff tones:

"Where did you leave General Buller and the troopers, friend?"

"Scouring the wood outside, sir. I gave them the slip."

"I am sorry you came here until I sent for you, but it may be as well as it is. Where do you imagine Lord Longdale may be at present?"

"He is with Mr. Dalbert and the general. I left them at the skirt of the woods as I stole away."

"Then away with you to them again, and you will hear from me to-morrow. The young lady will be your bride to-morrow night. When you see Lord Longdale alone again, let him know that you were aware who he was all the time."

"That I will, sir, and I'll have some fun out of the rascal. Nellie, my dear, you must dance at our wedding."

In less than five minutes after Percy Green was hastening through the wood, having embraced Blanche and Nellie, while he joyfully muttered:

"I am the happiest man in the world to-night, and I'll make Mr. Mortimer Spenser the most miserable ere long, if he don't

look out for himself. I thought the fellow was half a fool, but he turns out to be a whole knave. The Wild Bull is a brick."

Light was Percy's heart when he joined General Buller, the reporter and the distressed father, and no one joined in the search for Blanche with more vim.

On returning along the road after the unsuccessful effort, Percy Green found himself riding alone with the Cockney reporter.

"What do you think of the Wild Bull now, Spenser?" asked Percy.

"Can't make him out, egad. He is either a wild brute or a very clever fellow working in disguise."

"He is a clever man working in disguise, I feel certain. By the way, did you ever attempt a disguise?"

The question was put very abruptly, and Percy turned in his saddle to face the other at the same moment.

The pretended Cockney reporter hesitated a moment and bent a pair of sharp, gray eyes on the questioner ere he replied:

"Why do you ask that question, old fellow? It is too ridiculous."

The American burst out into a fit of laughter, and then rode on the faster, singing:

"When you gang awa, laddie,
Far across the sea, laddie,
When you gang to Garmanie,
What will you bring to me, laddie?"

Percy's late companion in the press spurred on after him until he was by his side again, and changed and fierce was his voice, as he cried:

"What do you mean by that song, I'd like to know, Green?"

"What do I mean? Why, you know the Scotch song, I presume. It is about a great lord, in disguise of a sailor, courting an humble maiden. Do not look so fierce, my lord, as your disguise was too thin for me all along."

Fiercer still were the lord's eyes, and louder rang his voice, as he cried:

"Do you mean to intimate that you knew my rank and name all through?"

"Of course I do. Ha, ha, ha! I have been laughing in my sleeves at you, my Lord Longdale, ever since the very first day we started out from London together."

The two-faced nobleman drew his horse closer to the steed of the American and raised his riding-whip, as he cried:

"Then you will laugh at the wrong side of your mouth now, you spying Yankee puppy. Take that!"

As the Englishman spoke, he aimed a fierce blow at Percy with his whip, but the latter wheeled his horse aside at the instant, letting fly with his own lash a moment after, as he cried:

"I'll laugh and win, my lord. Now, let us have it out as men."

The blow fell on Lord Longdale's shoulder and sent him reeling from his horse to the ground, and Percy sprang from his own steed as he uttered the last words.

The English nobleman was soon on his feet again, still holding the whip in his hand as he faced his young antagonist from America, crying, with great fury:

"You miserable Yankee hound, I will lash you within an inch of your life, but I first desire to ask you a few questions. Will you answer, or will I have to apply the lash first?"

Percy stood on the defense in the middle of the road, with his whip on guard, as he replied in jeering tones:

"I cannot refuse to answer a noble lord in disguise. What would you like to know from your humble servant?"

General Buller and the other soldiers had swept out of sight and the two rivals stood alone on the lonely road, their horses having galloped away.

"You have interviewed this beast who is known as the Wild

Bull of Kerry, and I must know who he is," continued Lord Longdale, in the most insolent tones.

"And if I refuse to answer, my lord—what then?"

"I will lash you within an inch of your life, and then have you hung as a vile Yankee-Irish rebel, as I believe you to be. I am certain that you are in league with the Wild Bull, and General Buller agrees with me. Answer me, or——"

The bully, who was noted in London as a powerful athlete, raised the heavy end of the whip and wound the thong around his wrist as he advanced on the young American.

Percy Green retreated before him, chuckling aloud as he replied:

"I know you are a tremendous hitter, my lord, but be merciful. You wish to know all about the Wild Bull of Kerry?"

"Yes, yes. What about the beast, or I will lay on?"

"The Wild Bull is here to answer for himself," cried a fierce voice, as the rude horseman dashed out on the road in his strange costume, and mounted on his black steed. "Fight out your quarrel, gentlemen, and I will answer the great Longdale after. At it and I will be the judge. I'll bet on the American."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RIVALS AND THE WILD BULL.

The two reporters about to engage in a serious strife were intensely surprised at the sudden appearance of the wild rider, and Percy Green exclaimed as he drew still further back on the road:

"Blame me if he isn't everywhere when he's not wanted!"

The Englishman was as much surprised as his rival, but he was a cool customer, and he soon recovered himself.

Turning to the Wild Bull, who had drawn his horse up on the side of the road near ~~him~~, he quietly remarked:

"Gad, so it is the fellow himself, and no mistake! So you want to stand as umpire in this match, old fellow?"

"I do that, my lord," answered the Wild Bull; "but I believe it is against the rules of the ring to bet, otherwise I would go a trifle on the Yankee."

"Ah, indeed! It is very evident that you lean toward your friend."

"Who told you he was my friend?"

"He has interviewed you, and he didn't take you prisoner or shoot you, as I should have done," was the Englishman's cool reply, as his left hand strayed toward his breast pocket. The Wild Bull drew a revolver as quick as a flash and aimed it at the head of the lord, as he cried:

"Draw a weapon on me, sir, and down you go without mercy. Take and drop your left hand, as I have the drop on you, as they say in America."

The Englishman did lower both arms to his side, as he quietly remarked:

"Gad, I think you have served as a cowboy in Texas, my friend."

"Perhaps I have. Lower your arms also, Mr. Green, and none of your Yankee tricks with me."

Percy Green lowered his arms to his side as well, as he remarked, with a jeering laugh at the lord:

"Perhaps you can now understand why I didn't kill or capture the Wild Bull at our interview, my lord."

"Lasso them, and then out to secure your prisoners," yelled the Wild Bull in commanding tones.

The command was scarcely given when two ropes flung by unseen hands flew over the necks of the reporters, and then out from the bushes sprang four masked moonlighters, who secured the prisoners thus taken in very short order.

Lord Longdale turned on the wild leader of the outlaws and remarked, in the most matter-of-fact tones:

"I thought you were going to let us fight it out, Mr. Wild Bull?"

"So I am, my lord, but not in the manner you proposed."

"How, then, pray?"

"I will decide that hereafter. Blindfold your prisoners and away with them on their horses on the double-quick."

The two prisoners could now see two other moonlighters leading their horses back the road toward them.

Then all was darkness to them, as they were bandaged over the eyes in the most effective manner possible.

As the prisoners were being lifted on the horses they could hear the tramping of other animals galloping along the road toward them, and the leader of the moonlighters cried to his men:

"Away into the woods with them, as the troopers are coming back for them."

Lord Longdale was about to raise his voice to yell to his friends, when the Wild Bull clapped his hand on his mouth, saying:

"Keep quiet, or we will soon silence you. Gag the prisoners."

When the troopers under General Buller rode back in search of the two reporters, the outlaws had disappeared in the woods with their prisoners.

"What can Allman be at now?" Percy Green asked himself, as they rode along in silence. "He must have altered his plans since I saw him in the rendezvous. Blame me if he is not a very wonderful character."

"A clear case of blackmail, I'll go bail," muttered the English lord, under his breath; "but hang me if the beggars will get a shilling out of me except what they may steal now."

Lord Longdale was a cool customer, as well as a plucky man, and his pulse did not beat any the faster on finding that he was in the power of the Wild Bull of Kerry.

After reflecting a little on the situation, he muttered to himself again:

"This infernal Yankee is in the game, I can now perceive. Just wait till Buller gets his claws on him. Hang me if I don't believe he is after the girl, and the blasted Irish outlaw is working for him. I'll keep cool and watch for points, and then I'll win the game."

When the cool Englishman was allowed to open his eyes again he found himself in a dungeon-like chamber with Percy Green and the Wild Bull, who still wore his hide and horns.

The gags were removed at the same time, as the leader of the outlaws said:

"You may yell as much as you please here, gentlemen, but I can assure you that your friends will not hear you."

"I'll try the experiment, in any case," said the English lord, as he placed his hands to his mouth and then gave a hunting cry that could be heard far away if they were on the open fields.

The sounds re-echoed through a long vault beyond, and then died away without reaching those in the woods above.

A grim laugh burst from the Wild Bull ere he cried:

"That cry may awake the dead, my lord, but it will not be heard by your living friends, I can assure you."

The Englishman clapped his hands in his pockets and stared around the chamber as if examining a drawing-room, as he drawled forth in his easy way:

"A deuced queer hole, egad. It smells like a vault for the dead."

"That it does," said Percy Green, imitating the voice and manner of his late traveling companion. "I say, Mr. Wild Bull, my dear fellow, won't you be kind enough to tell us where we are, and why you brought us here?"

"To finish that fight, of-course, Mr. Green," was the prompt reply. "It is to be to the death, I suppose."

"Of course," answered the lord, "if the fellow don't apologize properly."

"What should I apologize for, my dear lord?" asked Percy, with a grin.

"For playing the spy on me, sir."

"In what manner, my noble lord?"

"You confessed that you traveled with me in my disguise, knowing my rank, and you did not so inform me."

"Really, my lord," said Percy, in humble tones, "I cannot see the offense on my part in that. As you wished to be unknown here, it would not be courteous for me to betray you."

"Then why did you betray me to-night?"

"I did not do so in the presence of witnesses, my lord."

"Hang it all, I must thrash you for your insolence in any case. You had the audacity to raise your whip to me."

"Did you not strike at me first, my lord? Would I not be a cur if I did not defend myself?"

"I believe you are a Yankee cur, and I must punish you. Mr. Wild Bull, will you be kind enough to restore our whips?"

"With pleasure, but I would prefer to see you fight it out with other weapons, my lord. Allow me to propose them."

"As you please. All weapons are the same to me, Mr. Wild Bull."

Keeping very quiet under the insulting threats of his rival, Percy said:

"And to me, my lord. Let our host here arrange the matter. I feel that I must draw a little blood from you."

"Lord Longdale, did you not come to Ireland for some secret purpose?" asked the Wild Bull, in very stern and hoarse tones.

"Can't see that it is any concern of yours, Mr. Mad Calf," was the sneering reply from the lord, who then turned away to whistle a lively operatic air.

Quick as thought the wild fellow flung himself on the lord, seized him by the throat and flung him on the ground.

Planting his heavy foot on the breast of the prostrate man, the fierce outlaw then yelled out:

"None of your insolence with me, you English puppy, or I'll crush your cruel heart in for you. I know the reason you came here, and I will take my revenge on you in defeating you."

The helpless lord stared up at his assailant as he replied:

"Gad! that was well done and quickly, my good fellow. I'll wager you a hundred pounds or a good horse against your black steed that you can't repeat it."

"Yes, I can, and a hundred times over in one hour. Up with you, and you will see. Get ready."

The fallen man regained his feet and placed himself in a boxing attitude, as he drawled forth:

"Come on now, Mr. Bull."

Without a moment's hesitation the strange man sprang at his challenger, knocked aside his guards with apparent ease, and then hurled him to the floor again, as he cried:

"You owe me a good horse and more besides, my lord, all of which I will take at the proper time. Another bout?"

"No, thank you, much obliged," drawled the fallen man. "Pray by what name must we address you if you will be so kind? Gad, you have the strength of two bulls."

"I am known as Allman to some of my friends. You may call me by that name at present, my lord."

The vanquished man regained his feet again and stared anew at the stalwart form before him as he drawled forth:

"The deuce take it if it is not just the name for you, as you are all man and muscle, I can imagine."

"That is a poor pun, my lord. Now, let us get down to business."

"Very well; but, I say, Mr. Allman?"

"What is it, my lord?"

"I've thought of a scheme by which you can make a fortune."

"Let us hear it."

"Put yourself in my charge and let us go over to America to wallop the great Yankee champion. I'll wager two to one you can do it with ease."

"I have nobler work on hand at present, my lord," replied the strong men, in dignified tones. "I said you had a secret purpose in coming over to Ireland in disguise. Will you answer me now?"

The English lord shrugged his shoulders as he mildly answered:

"You may repeat the dose, but I cannot allow any stranger to interfere in my private business, I assure you, Mr. Allman."

"But what if I know your secret purpose already, my lord?"

The nobleman cast an ominous glance at Percy Green, as he replied:

"If you do, I think I will owe that person another little account."

"I know nothing of your private affairs, sir," cried Percy, "and if you give me any more of your snobbish insolence I will give you a dose of this man's medicine."

"Keep the peace, gentlemen, until I give the word to set on," cried the unknown outlaw. "My lord, I will tell you one of your secrets. You came here to wed Blanche Dalbert or to ruin her father."

The cool Englishman appeared to lose his self-control for the first time, as he started and stared at the Wild Bull, ere he exclaimed in excited tones:

"Confound it all! Dalbert must have exposed our private affairs."

"He has not, sir, but I have means of learning secrets. I can tell Mr. Percy Green there that he also came to Ireland to pay court to a certain lady."

"The deuce you say!" cried the aroused Englishman. "Can it be possible that the fellow has the insolence to aspire to the hand of Miss Dalbert?"

"I have, Lord Longdale," cried Percy, in manly tones, "and I feel assured that I can defeat you in that quarter as well as in single combat. Now, let us know the terms of the fight, if you please, Mr. Allman. I stand ready."

"That is my style," cried his rival, "as it must be war to the death now."

The Wild Bull appeared to reflect for some moments, as he pressed his hands to his eyes and bent his ugly head until his chin touched his breast.

Then clapping his hands together, he suddenly exclaimed:

"I have it now. Bodily contests and duels are in bad taste nowadays. You are both men of brains, and why not have a trial of brains for love and life?"

"In what way?" asked Percy.

"I will make a proposition to the pair of you, and give you three tasks."

"What are they?" asked the nobleman, with a suspicious glance at his young rival. "I trust I'll have fair play."

"All the fair play in the world, my lord," answered the strange man. "Are you both ready to hear my proposals?"

"I am," promptly answered Percy.

"By Jove, but I don't promise to accept them, though, until I understand what they are," was the Englishman's reply.

"That is right, my lord. The first task I set is a simple one. It is to win the hand of the young lady in question, and who will return to her home to-morrow."

"I will undertake the very agreeable task," said Percy Green.

"Egad, and so will I," said his rival, with a confident smile.

"Very well, sirs," continued the Wild Bull. "The second task will be to effect the capture or death of the outlaw known as the Wild Bull of Kerry."

"What a guy!" exclaimed Lord Longdale, with a sneer.

"You are partial to my Yankee rival, Mr. Allman, and you

can easily play into his hands. I am not to be caught in that trap, if I know it."

"You seem to forget that you are in my trap now, my lord, and I can deal with you as I please. Admitting that I am partial to this young American stranger, you will have all the power of England about here on your side. If you agree to all my proposals I will set you both free to-night, and then you will have a clear field against me. Is it likely that I will willingly give myself up to any one who would place me in an English prison?"

"If that is a condition of your arrest, I agree to the second proposal," said the cautious nobleman. "What says my rival?"

"I agree," answered Percy.

And he then asked himself:

"What in the mischief can this strange being be driving at now? He puzzles me more every time I see him."

"The third task I will impose on you is this," continued the disguised outlaw. "Mr. Claude Dalbert's estate will soon be in the market. Whichever of you secures it will gain the third point."

A scornful sneer appeared on Lord Longdale's face as he exclaimed:

"By Jove, I will gladly accept that proposal. I question if my beggarly rival has a hundred pounds to his name."

"Whether I have or not, you insolent puppy," answered Percy Green, "I will accept the third proposal. Now, what is the penalty of failure, sir?"

The words were addressed to the Wild Bull, who answered in solemn tones that seemed to be echoed in the vault beyond:

"Death to the vanquished, and by his own hand!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE RIVALS SET AT THE TASKS.

There was a dead silence for a few moments after the solemn words were uttered by the outlaw, and the Englishman was the first to speak, as he said:

"I do not quite comprehend the penalty imposed. It may be that one of us may succeed in one or two of the peculiar tasks and fail in the third. Then who is to be declared the vanquished?"

Speaking in solemn and prophetic tones, the strange outlaw answered:

"The man who will accomplish one of the tasks will accomplish all. The vanquished must take his own life, as you said it was to be war to the death between you, Lord Longdale."

"I abide the penalty, and I swear to take my own life if I fail against my rival," said Percy Green, in manly tones. "I am willing to struggle to the death for the love of Miss Blanche Dalbert."

"Then you will die," answered his rival, with great scorn.

"Remember, gentlemen," said the Wild Bull, "that there must be no needless personal violence during the contest. If one should fall by the hand or the intrigues of the other during the struggle, I swear to take the life of the survivor."

"I agree to that, also," said the nobleman, "and I will even condescend to be civil to this fellow, should we meet."

"And I agree," said Percy, "not to kick this English puppy should we meet hereafter, but I will not promise to treat him as I would a gentleman."

"That is enough," cried the Wild Bull, "save that you must both keep your agreement as a secret. With this full understanding, and with the solemn assurance from me that death will befall the first of you who attempts foul treachery on the other, we will part."

"Of course, it must be understood," drawled Lord Longdale, "that the usual harmless stratagems of love and war——"

"Use any stratagems you please," interrupted Percy, "yet I defy you. Defame me, have me arrested as a rebel or for any other crime, still will I defeat you in the contest. That is enough now."

Very few words were afterward exchanged between the rivals until they were blindfolded and led forth into the wood.

As Percy Green was leaving the rendezvous in charge of two moonlighters a voice whispered into his ear:

"The issue is made, and you must conquer or die, as you have to deal with one who is your natural enemy."

"I fear not the encounter," answered Percy, in subdued tones. "I will win my bride and slay my mortal foe."

"You will remember that I will be on hand to aid you."

"I will not forget. Unless assailed by the authorities or his secret followers, I will not call on you, good friend. Will I see the young lady at her home soon?"

"She will be in Primrose Hall before you return there. Good-by now."

As they were not led out together, the sworn rival of the young American did not hear the whispered words then uttered by those who had conspired against him.

When Percy reached Primrose Hall that night he learned that Blanche and Longdale had arrived there before him.

"What a queer man Allman is," muttered the young American. "One would suppose that he had no plan in view, but that he was working at random."

As agreed between them in the rendezvous of the outlaws, the stories of their capture by the Wild Bull and his followers tallied to a dot when told to General Buller and Claude Dalbert.

"I am to give the Wild Bull a good horse for my release," said Lord Longdale, with a yawn.

"And I am to write the truth about him," said Percy Green.

General Buller knew Lord Longdale in his proper character, and he suspected that Percy Green was something more than a reporter, but he kept silent.

That very night, however, a strict watch was set on the young American, and as his rival was retiring to bed he chuckled to himself as he muttered:

"A deuced queer game this is, but I have scored the first trick. The insolent Yankee will never cross the Atlantic again if I know my cards."

After Blanche had given her account of her capture to her father, she continued, in plaintive strains:

"Oh, father, although he appeared in that horrid disguise, he spoke to me in the gentlest manner possible."

"But why did the wild rascal tear you away in such a rude way, then?"

"Because, as he said, he wishes to show you his power, and to prove that he can enter this house to injure you whenever he may desire to do so."

"Confound the rascal, whoever he is! He must be mad, if he thinks to compel me to give way to my rebellious tenants."

"Then you will hear from him again, father, I am certain. Do put the poor people back in their old homes, sir."

"It is impossible, Blanche. I will sell the estate for half its value first. Oh, why will you not listen to the proposal made to you, and all will be well."

"You mean me to wed Lord Longdale?"

"Yes, yes, of course."

"Will it be ruin to us if I do not wed this man, dear father?"

"Utter and deadly ruin, girl."

"Then I must request you to give me three days to consider the matter, sir, as you know I cannot bear him."

"Take them, by all means, and remember that I am a doomed man if you do not consent. He is coming here to-morrow. Will you be courteous to him?"

"I will, sir."

Mortimer Spenser disappeared on the following morning, and Lord Longdale appeared at the hall as a favored guest.

When Blanche saw her would-be lover on the lawn she mentally exclaimed:

"Mercy on me, how can a man alter his appearance so much? I wonder if Mr. Percy Green is as clever in that line?"

The American reporter also disappeared after his rival, with two able English detectives close on his track.

Percy managed to give the fellows the slip in Killarney, however, and he afterward chuckled to himself, muttering:

"Now for a little counter game, my noble lord. I see your hand, and let us know if you hold to it."

During the afternoon a new guest appeared at the hall in the form of Mr. Leon Levi, the credited agent of a Jewish banking house in London.

Mr. Levi was a tall gentleman of middle age, wearing a full dark beard and eye-glasses, and he spoke with a decided foreign accent, while he soon gave out that he was an extensive traveler.

Claude Dalbert had had dealings with the banking firm mentioned, and he was not at all pleased to see the representative at that particular time.

When Mr. Leon Levi announced, however, in a private interview that he was sent to negotiate for the purchase of the estate, at a fair value, in behalf of a rich Irish-American, Dalbert's frowns turned to smiles, and the Jewish gentleman was made much of.

On the following day the good-looking Jew rode out with Blanche, her father and Lord Longdale, and they paid a visit to the beautiful lakes of Killarney.

The rich English lord was not sure that the Jew was negotiating for the estate, as he imagined that Dalbert was only seeking another loan on it.

He did notice, however, that Blanche was a good deal in Mr. Levi's company, and that they strolled together through the lawn in the evening.

In the meantime the flying patrols were seeking the Wild Bull on every hill and in every wood for miles around, but the daring rider was not captured.

On the second day of the Jew's visit he was strolling with Blanche on the broad lawn as he remarked:

"Did you notice those fellows watching us down near the gate, my dear?"

"I did not, you rogue."

"Well, Longdale has set his spies on me already, I am sure."

"But he cannot suspect who you are, you clever rascal."

"I think not, but he may suspect that I am after the estate."

"Then what is to be done?"

"I must see Mr. Allman to-night at all hazards, and you keep your father and Longdale in play. The crisis is coming, my darling, and a single false move on my part would be fatal."

"Longdale is coming toward us now," said Blanche, in alarm, "and there is a strange gentleman with him. Mercy, it is Mr. Allman himself—the Wild Bull!"

"Hush, hush! and do not mention that name aloud. Here they are."

Another few moments and the strange man was standing before them with formal introductions from the man they feared so much.

though assured that the daring outlaw, in whose fate she felt so much interest, was standing before her.

"I am happy to meet you, Mr. Logan," was all Blanche said, as she bowed to the bearded man.

Leon Levi also bowed to the stranger in a stately way, as he remarked:

"Fine weather we have, sir."

The stranger, who had been introduced to them by the lord under the name of Logan, looked around the lawn and over the green meadows beyond, as he remarked:

"Splendid country, this."

"Yes, it would be," said the English lord, "if we could drive the old herd out of it and put in new stock. Miss Blanche, where is your father?"

"I can't say, my lord," answered the young girl, in cold tones.

Blanche felt that the fellow was spying on her and her disguised lover, and she was also uneasy at his appearing in the company of the famous outlaw.

After exchanging a few commonplace opinions, Lord Longdale took the arm of the stranger and strolled away with him across the lawn, while Blanche and her disguised lover walked in an opposite direction.

When Mr. Logan and the lord were some distance away the latter said:

"Well, Logan, what do you think of the fellow now?"

Speaking in decided tones, but with a husky voice, the disguised outlaw replied:

"He is as he represents himself, my lord. I have seen him in London in the Jewish banking house."

"That settles it, as far as he is concerned, I suppose, but what in the mischief is he wasting his time here for, can you imagine?"

"You say the estate is mortgaged to its full value already, my lord?"

"Yes, and beyond it. The Jew can't be fool enough to loan Dalbert even a hundred pounds more on it."

"Then this Mr. Leon Levi must be attracted by the young lady, my lord."

"Don't be a fool, Logan. A Jew making love to Miss Blanche Dalbert!"

"That is the only excuse I can give for his lingering here, my lord."

Lord Longdale mused a moment and then turned to the other, saying:

"See here, Logan, I telegraphed to the Scotland Yard, London, for one of their ablest detectives, and you have been sent to me. I want you to fully understand that you are engaged in a matter of the gravest importance to me."

"I do understand so, my lord."

"Then you will keep your wits on their keenest edge, as you have clever ones to deal with. I believe that Jew is working in the interest of my enemies."

"What reason have you to think so, my lord?"

"I feel that he is, and that is enough for me. You must watch his every movement, and listen as well."

"Very good, my lord."

"If you track the Jew, well, I'll wager you'll be finding the hiding-hole of the blasted young American, Logan."

"Then you are certain the Yankee is still in this neighborhood, my lord?"

"Certainly. He is certain to be hiding in one of the dens of the infernal Irish outlaw I told you about. Isn't it queer, Logan, that we cannot, with all the force at our command, hunt down the Wild Bull? 'Tis barbarous!"

The pretended detective shrugged his shoulders as he replied:

"I should have time, my lord. Even in the very heart of London men have been known to hide for weeks and months. These Irish savages have some cunning, I should say."

CHAPTER X.

APPROACHING THE CRISIS.

As Lord Longdale introduced the stranger to Blanche and Leon Levi, the young girl played her part right well, as not a quiver of undue agitation appeared on her charming face, al-

"Oh, they are cunning enough, blast their eyes. I say, Logan?"

"What is it, my lord?"

"Wouldn't it be a good plan for you to get intimate with this confounded Jew as soon as possible, and worm all you can out of him?"

"An excellent plan, my lord. Being introduced here by you as an old friend from London, I should have no trouble in making up to the Jew, although he has the appearance of a keen man of the world."

"That is true, Logan. For a Jew, he appears to be so-and-so; yet I feel a peculiar hatred for the fellow that I cannot comprehend. Get at him, and see if you can draw him out."

"I'll do it, my lord. Now, about this Wild Bull. Are you certain that the place you escaped from the other night was in the wood you speak of?"

"I am certain of it; and I tell you again that it smelt like an old burying vault. It was horrible."

"Are there any old burying-places in the neighborhood, my lord?"

"Of course. Ireland is full of old burying-places, and I only wish that every blasted Irishman in the land was under ground. They would serve to fertilize the soil for the English landlords."

"It would be a good riddance, my lord. But as to our business. Is there any old ruin in the wood you speak of?"

"I see what you are at, Logan, but you are astray. Buller has examined the wood thoroughly, and he could not find the least trace of an old ruin in it. It must have been a large cave of some kind, or a pit. Try your hand again."

"Is there a church or a convent in or near the wood, my lord?"

"That I cannot say, but I will make inquiries. I have got an idea of my own about this Wild Bull, Logan."

"May I hear it, my lord?"

"Of course, as I want you to work on the theory. I believe the rascal is some poor landlord about here who cannot get his rents out of his tenants."

"That is a novel theory, my lord. But what grounds have you for it?"

"I cannot state them now, but I will give you a clew or two to work on. The fellow can speak like a gentleman, he rides like a steeple-chaser, and he is the strongest man by far I ever met."

Claude Dalbert rode up at the moment, and the pretended detective was introduced to him by the lord as a particular friend from London.

In the meantime, Blanche and her disguised lover were trolling across the lawn, while the former was saying:

"I'm sure I cannot understand what character he is attempting to play now, but I can see that Lord Longdale is suspicious of you, Percy."

"I agree with you there, my dear; but I cannot move any faster than I am doing, you know. The license for our marriage requires three days' notice, and——"

"Oh, don't think that I am in such a hurry about that now," interrupted the young girl, with a blush and a sly smile, "as I was only thinking of the danger incurred by you and Mr. Allman."

"Have no fear on my account, dear girl, and I think Mr. Allman can take care of himself. He is playing some deep game with the cunning lord now, but I can't imagine what it is."

"He is a wonderful man, and I love him as well as fear him, Percy. Oh, if you were to only know him as I do."

"I confess that I am curious to know all about him, dear Blanche, but I will never pry into his secrets. I first met him in London last winter, but it seems he has known me since childhood. One thing is very certain, and that is that we are approaching a great crisis in our lives."

"And our fate seems to be in his hands," answered Blanche,

with an anxious sigh and a glance at the mysterious man, then with Lord Longdale. "Oh, I do wish it were all over, as I tremble for father!"

"We must save your father at all cost, my dear one," said Percy. "I will endeavor to speak to Mr. Allman as soon as possible, and see what he means by coming here in that character."

"Yes, and I think it would be just as well if we kept more apart," said Blanche, turning toward the house. "If Lord Longdale should discover you he would soon have you in prison."

"I don't doubt it, and I will be more careful. Not that I fear prison walls, but I want my freedom to fight the great battle for you, my darling."

The lovers kept apart for some hours after, while Mr. Logan sought an opportunity of conversing with Mr. Leon Levi on the lawn in the evening.

Soon after that interview Lord Longdale drew Logan aside and asked him in whispered tones:

"Well, what do you make of the Jew?"

"He is a close one, my lord, but I think I found out what he is after."

"What is it, then?"

"He is negotiating for the purchase of the Dalbert estate here."

"Tush! Logan, I fear that you are not a captain among detectives. Dalbert dare not sell to any one save myself."

"I may be wrong, my lord, but I am ready to back my opinion. May I ask you why Mr. Dalbert cannot sell to any one else?"

"Because I hold him in the hollow of my hand, as it were. I could hang the fellow if he played any tricks on me."

"That is serious, my lord. Of course, you cannot tell me the secret?"

"Of course not. It does not concern this affair at all. What else did you worm out of the rascally Jew?"

"I am afraid you will say that I am not even a good private among detectives if I were to give you another of my ideas concerning his visit here, my lord."

"Out with it, anyway."

"I am convinced that he aspires to the hand of the young lady."

Lord Longdale gave a low whistle and stared at his detective, ere he replied, in the most sarcastic tones:

"Really, Logan, you are out of your latitude in Scotland Yard. I would advise you to resign at once, and I will commend you to a publisher in London as a writer of extravagant romances. What next from your prolific brain? The young lady returns the passion of the ambitious and brilliant Jew, of course?"

"I have not interviewed the young lady yet, my lord, but I have known stranger things to happen in my experience. I presume that I am dismissed, my lord."

"Not at all, not at all, Logan. Although I am not in raptures over your detective work, I am desirous of retaining you in my service, as you are so very amusing, so very amusing."

"As I am not a court fool, my lord, I must beg to decline the honor," answered the detective with great dignity; "but before I retire from your service I have to give you some more information."

While Lord Longdale ridiculed his detective he had penetration enough to see that he was an able man, and he did not care to lose his services at that important juncture.

Clapping his hand on the man's shoulder in a familiar manner, he addressed him in subdued and agreeable tones, saying:

"Nonsense, Logan; I was only jesting with you, as I must have my lark, you know. You are a man of the world, and should take a joke. What else have you to tell me?"

"I believe the Jew is acquainted with the person now known as the Wild Bull of Kerry, my lord."

"The mischief you say, Logan? What makes you think so?"

"Because he intimated to me that the wild man was not a common outlaw, and then smiled in a significant way."

"On my honor, Logan, if all your theories are correct—and I incline with you in some of them—it is high time I forced matters to a crisis with Dalbert, and I'll do it at once."

"As you please about that, my lord. In the meantime, I will seek to find the hiding-place of the young Yankee."

"Blaze away at him and at the Wild Bull, Logan. Buller will give you all the troops you require. I'll seek Dalbert."

The intriguer did seek Claude Dalbert on the instant, and a somewhat stormy interview soon followed in the bedroom of the noble visitor.

"What can I do," protested Dalbert, at length. "If you will not permit me to sell my estate to a good purchaser, I cannot pay you what I owe you, my lord."

"Hang the payment, Dalbert, I want your daughter, and I must have her. I want the estate to remain in the family, and you must sell it to me. If you fail me, I will denounce you."

"Oh, my lord, I cannot force my daughter any more until the time——"

"Hang the time! Your daughter must be my wife at once. We can arrange for a private marriage on to-morrow night, and we can have a public affair later."

"I fear Blanche will hold me to my promise, my lord."

"To the dogs with your promise! Did you tell her that your neck was at stake?"

"Would you have me humble myself and confess my crime to my own child, my lord?"

"Of course I would. What do I care for your infernal pride? If the girl has any heart, she will save her father's neck from the halter, by accepting a husband and a title. Hang it all, I am conferring all the honor, you know."

"I know it, my lord, but——"

"No more buts with me. Go to the silly girl and tell her of your crime."

"Tell it to me first," said a hoarse voice behind them.

The two men turned on the instant with startled exclamations, when they found themselves confronted by the Wild Bull in his full outlandish costume.

The valiant lord made a sudden movement for a weapon in his pocket, when the strange man presented a revolver at each of their heads, as he hissed forth in his hoarse tones:

"One movement, or one loud word, and I will floor the pair of you. Out with your secret about Mr. Dalbert, my lord. I may throw a little light on the mystery. Be seated and take it easy."

CHAPTER XI.

THE WILD BULL AT MORE PRANKS.

Lord Longdale shrugged his shoulders and resumed his seat and remarked:

"This is some of your Irish fair play."

"It is fairer than your English methods, my lord," retorted the wild Bull, as his dark eyes flashed out through his disguise. "Are you working up to the letter of your agreement with me?"

Claude Dalbert stared from one to the other as he asked:

"What does this mean, my lord? Is this outlaw in your interest?"

"No; I am working in yours, Claude Dalbert," was the prompt answer of the outlaw. "Had you taken my advice regarding your tenants, and——"

"Hang the tenants," interrupted Lord Longdale. "Let us get at the object of your welcome visit to us."

"My object is to learn the secret you hold over Mr. Dalbert."

"Then you are wasting your time, as you will not hear it from us. Will he, Dalbert? Are you ready to make the Wild Bull of Kerry your father confessor?"

"Ridiculous! See here, you infernal rascal," exclaimed Dalbert, "I'll soon show you that I am not to be browbeaten in my own house."

"Not so loud, Mr. Claude Dalbert, or this pistol may go off," warned the disguised man.

"I don't care if it does. Death has no terrors for me, and the report will alarm the soldiers in the house."

"Are you prepared to die, also, my lord?"

The brave Briton stared up at the outlaw in a haughty manner, as he replied:

"You should know that I am not to be browbeaten, either, fellow."

"But you hate to be beaten in a struggle for love and life, my lord. Well, if you do not care to tell the secret, I may surmise it, for all that. Claude Dalbert, I know your secret also."

"You—you!" gasped the astonished landlord. "It cannot be!"

"Tush! the fellow is but trying to draw you out, Dalbert," interposed the cool lord, with a warning glance.

"I am not, my lord. The secret alludes to a certain event that occurred about seven years ago, if I mistake not. To be plain with the pair of you, it was a mysterious murder case. Ah! you both start a little now, I see."

The two men did start, while Dalbert gasped forth:

"In the name of the fiend, who are you, and how much do you know?"

"I am a man, and an Irishman like yourself, Mr. Dalbert, barring that I hope I have some feeling for my fellow countrymen, and I don't care to see them all in the ground, for the purpose of enriching the soil for English landlords."

Lord Longdale started and stared in turn as he muttered between his teeth: "Logan hit it right. The rascal of a Jew is in league with them."

"What is that you say, my lord?" asked the Wild Bull.

"'Tis no concern of yours, fellow. Well, what more do you know about the murder?"

"More than you do, perhaps. You were a witness of it?"

"By George, you are in league with Old Nick!" exclaimed the lord. "Who have you been blabbing with, Dalbert?"

Claude Dalbert groaned aloud ere he replied:

"I have never opened my lips to another soul about the affair."

"Then, by Jove, you must talk in your sleep."

"I am not aware that I do, my lord, but I may. Oh, it is terrible!"

"What is terrible?"

"To think that this rebel outlaw knows my secret."

"Maybe it is safer in my keeping, Claude Dalbert, than it is in that of this noble friend of yours. In any case, I have known it for years, and I have not attempted to blackmail you on account of it. But I am on that game now."

"What do you mean, fellow?" asked Dalbert, with another shudder.

"To be plain with you," answered the strange man, with a chuckle, "as the price of my silence I am here to demand the hand of your daughter."

Lord Longdale burst into a hearty fit of laughter, crying:

"Harg me, Dalbert, if that isn't the best joke of the season."

The unhappy landlord ground his teeth in rage, exclaiming:

"You are a pair of fiends, to thus sport with the misery of an unfortunate wretch. Go to perdition!"

The last words were addressed to the Wild Bull, who responded:

"If I go there I will take my bride with me. Humbugging apart, Claude Dalbert, may I not be as fitting a husband for your daughter as this very honorable friend of yours? Answer me."

"Say what brought you here, rascal, and be off with you? I will make no terms with either of you now. Lord Longdale, your power over me has ceased, as another shares your secret," cried Claude Dalbert, springing to his feet and standing in a defiant attitude. "I defy you both."

"Don't get ruffled, Dalbert, as it is in deuced bad taste," said the self-possessed Englishman. "This rude fellow was but attempting a silly jest."

"I was not jesting as regards Miss Blanche," responded the Wild Bull, "as I am certain she would prefer me as a husband to you. In truth, I know she would."

"This is becoming unbearable!" cried Dalbert. "Again I ask you, in the name of the fiends, who are you and what is your real purpose in haunting me?"

"I am your friend, Claude Dalbert, if you will only take my advice, and I seek to wed your good daughter."

"Still harping on the daughter," chuckled Lord Longdale. "It is but fair that Dalbert should see the face of his intended son-in-law."

"He will see it, my lord. His daughter has already given her consent, and——"

"Nonsense!" cried the landlord.

"Don't you believe me?"

"Am I a fool?"

"You are—in some things; but I will convince you on this point."

The Wild Bull then raised his voice to a loud pitch and cried:

"Please step in here, Miss Blanche."

The door was soon opened and Blanche stepped into the room, saying:

"Is it all settled, sir?"

The two men stared at the young lady in sheer amazement, and then the noble lord clapped his hands in apparent glee as he exclaimed:

"By all that's magical, the Wild Beast has bewitched the Beauty of Primrose Hall. Miss Blanche, is it really true that you have accepted Mr. Allman here as your intended husband?"

Blanche advanced to the side of the disguised man and laid her hand on his shoulder as she replied:

"It is really true that I have accepted this gentleman as my promised husband, Lord Longdale. Father, I do assure you that you will yet be delighted with my choice, and——"

"Great goodness!" gasped the bewildered father, as he rubbed his eyes and then stared at his daughter; "am I in a dream, or what?"

"Gentlemen," said the disguised man, as he led Blanche toward the door, "it is but right that you should see my countenance."

"Yes, yes, by all means," cried Lord Longdale. "Let us know with whom we have to deal, my good fellow."

At a whisper from the disguised man Blanche darted out of the door and disappeared, while her companion stood facing the others as he replied, with his left hand raised to his head, while the other held a revolver ready:

"Don't be mad enough to attack me, or down you go. You know me now!"

He raised the disguise from his face as he spoke, and a proud smile was on the countenance then presented to the pair, as he continued:

"I have won the first test, Lord Longdale, and now for the others."

The speaker then sprang out into the dark hallway, and Lord Longdale dashed after him, yelling:

"It is the blasted Yankee reporter himself! Soldiers! po-

lice! Logan—where are you? Guard all the doors, and we'll take the infernal Yankee spy!"

"What is the matter, my lord?" cried his detective, as he ran up the stairs, followed by several policemen and soldiers, with General Buller, who was foremost to take the alarm."

A hurried explanation followed, and orders were given to seek the intruder throughout the house, as well as to guard all means of escape therefrom.

Claude Dalbert sought his daughter at the same time, as he was in a state of feverish anxiety to hear her explanations of the late trying scene.

Leon Levi appeared in the drawing-room in the height of the excitement, and approached Lord Longdale, saying:

"Is not this a remarkable affair I hear, my lord?"

"What did you hear, sir?" asked the other, in freezing tones, while he gave a sly wink at Logan, who was standing near.

"I heard that the famous outlaw, who is known as the Wild Bull of Kerry, has carried off Mr. Dalbert's daughter for the second time."

"So it appears, Mr. Levi. May I ask you a few questions?"

"Certainly, my lord."

"Were you ever acquainted with this very eccentric person?"

"You allude to the outlaw, my lord?"

"I do, sir."

"I never happened to meet him, that I know of, my lord. It may be, however, from what I have heard of him that I have met him in his natural character."

"Did you ever know a young person in London known as Percy Green?"

"I met a gentleman of the name who was connected with the American press, my lord, and I will be glad to meet him again. Why do you ask about him?"

"Merely for information, Mr. Levi. Have you seen him in Ireland lately?"

"I must decline to answer that question, my lord, as I understand that he is a suspect at present, and I am not a government detective, I assure you."

"I should think not, Mr. Levi; but I presume you are a loyal English subject, for all that, and——"

"You are mistaken, my lord, as I am proud to say that I am a citizen of the great American republic. I may meet Mr. Percy Green ere long, however, and I will be happy to give him any message from you."

"Ah, indeed! Well, you will favor me by telling him that he has not won the first test yet, and that I will fight him to the end."

Before Leon Levi could reply, Claude Dalbert entered the room and drew the English lord aside, as he whispered:

"I have found Blanche, my lord. Our best plan is to hasten her away to England this very hour."

"Egad, I am glad, Dalbert, and you are correct. We will away with her to the railroad under a strong guard, and I will defy Mr. Percy Green."

CHAPTER XII.

FIGHTING FOR THE FIRST TEST.

When Blanche Dalbert fled from the room where her father and the English lord had been consulting, she had no thought of escaping from the house at the time.

Fearing to meet her father during the excitement of the search, however, the young girl hastened to her own room, in the hope of remaining there undisturbed until the excitement was over.

She was soon aware that her father sought her, and when she heard his voice at the door demanding entrance, she has-

tened to hide herself in the large curtains surrounding the bedstead, while she muttered to herself:

"I cannot bear to face him now, as he must be very angry with me."

On finding the door of the bedroom locked Claude Dalbert moved away from it in great anger, muttering: "The mad girl will be my ruin."

Deeming herself safe from further intrusion, Blanche emerged from the curtains again and proceeded to make arrangements for leaving the house in the morning, while she muttered:

"Oh, how I fear that wretch! I will never be safe from him until I am dear Percy's wife. What a rogue he is! And did he not play the Wild Bull to perfection?"

While thus musing Blanche heard a soft step behind her, and on turning around she found herself face to face with her father, who looked on her with angry eyes.

Holding up his hand to command silence, Claude Dalbert commenced, in stern but cautious tones, saying:

"Mad girl! what is the meaning of your actions? Is it your fixed purpose to drag me to the scaffold, or force me to put an end to my miserable existence?"

Blanche was startled for the moment, but she soon recovered her presence of mind and calmly answered:

"I am not mad, sir, and I have acted for your happiness throughout."

"Indeed! you acted for my happiness by betraying my dread secret to an utter stranger. That was a kindness, I'm sure."

"I did not betray your secret, as I did not know it, and I do not know it now."

"Then how did that fellow hear it, if not from you? Oh, I am lost, Blanche!"

"You are not lost, father, if you will but defy Lord Longdale, and take the advice of true friends. Mr. Percy Green, if he does know your secret, would not betray you for all the world."

"Are you certain of that, girl?"

"I will stake my life and happiness on his honor, sir."

Dalbert pondered a few moments as if to collect his thoughts ere he continued:

"This Percy Green must be in league with the Wild Bull, girl, or else how could he enter here in that outlandish disguise? You must know the outlaw also. Who and what is he?"

"I do know him, father, but I am pledged to secrecy about him."

"Even to your own father, girl?"

"Even to my own father, sir. I will swear to you, however, that the outlaw is your true friend, and that he is pledged to protect me from Lord Longdale."

"But were he my friend a thousand times over, girl, he cannot protect me from the man you speak of, unless you consent to be his bride."

"And that I will never be, father, as I am pledged to another."

"Then I am doomed!"

"You are safe, sir, if you will but defy Lord Longdale to the end."

"You do not know the man, girl, and you do not realize the power he has over me. Oh, I am doomed!"

And the unhappy man groaned in agony, while Blanche replied:

"I only know, sir, that he accuses you of a great crime. May I ask you if you are really guilty of—"

"Oh, Blanche, girl, I am guilty in fact, but not in intention, I swear to you. More I cannot say."

"Does the vile wretch know that?"

"What does he care? Does this mysterious outlaw know of my crime?"

"He does, father, but your secret is as safe with him as it is with Mr. Green."

"Then the only one I have to fear, even on your own statement, is Lord Longdale; and who can silence him?"

"I am certain he will be silenced if he persists in persecuting us, sir."

"By the dagger of the assassin, do you mean to say, girl?"

"Not at all, sir. My friends are not assassins. The English lord will be silenced by his own act. Ask me no more."

"I see that you are hand-in-glove with these people, Blanche, and I do not know what to say or do. I must have time for reflection, as I am almost mad with apprehension and trouble. Will you promise one thing, girl?"

"What is it, sir?"

"Promise me not to leave the house with your mysterious friends until morning."

"I can readily promise that much, sir, as I had no intention of leaving the house until to-morrow morning."

"And where do you go then?"

"I cannot say, sir."

After a good deal of useless persuasion on his part, Claude Dalbert realized that he had lost control over his daughter's actions, but he left the room apparently satisfied with the promise given.

The house was still in commotion as he hastened to his own private apartment and flung himself on a chair, in order to reflect over his perilous position.

After pondering for some time in deep silence the anxious man sprang up from the chair, as he muttered:

"Longdale is my only safety. Blanche is certain of the silence of the others, but death alone can keep the lord from denouncing me if he loses the girl. We must away with her to England this very night, and coax her or force her to wed him. Then we can defy the Yankee and the Wild Bull."

Claude Dalbert then hastened from the room in search of Longdale, whom he found in the drawing-room with Leon Lev and Logan, the detective.

It did not take the two conspirators very long to decide as to their course of action, as we have seen, and they soon hastened from the room, leaving the pretended detective and Percy alone.

They were scarcely out of the room when the disguised American approached his mysterious friend and asked in a whisper:

"What is up now, think you, sir?"

"Can't say, but I'll soon find out. Be on your guard for flight by the secret door, as I think you are suspected. In fact, you had better disappear at once, but do not leave the house until you hear from me. We may have work to-night."

As Logan uttered the last words he moved away from his friend, and Lord Longdale appeared at the doorway a few minutes after, saying:

"I wish to see you, Logan."

The pretended detective cast a warning glance at Percy as he left the room, and when he was out in the hall Lord Longdale drew him aside, saying, in very low and guarded tones:

"A crisis has come, Logan, and we must act promptly. This infernal place is beset with rebels and their spies, and we are not safe here a moment."

"Then what do you propose, my lord?"

"We propose to take Miss Blanche to London right off. That infernal Jew is a Yankee, and he is in with the outlaws, as you suggested. He will be at once arrested as a suspect."

"Very good, my lord. What more?"

"The police will occupy this place while we are away. I want you to remain here as a guest, but with power to act against the blasted outlaws as you may see fit."

"I will remain, my lord."

"Your main work will be the capture or death—and I don't care which—of this infernal Wild Bull and the confounded young Yankee."

"Very good, my lord. Anything more?" asked the pretended detective.

"Not that I can think of on the instant, Logan. We will start with the girl and an armed escort at once. Move about the house with the police, and keep a sharp eye out for any suspicious rascals prowling about, as it is most infernally mysterious how these fellows can come and go at will."

"Very well, my lord. Do you suspect any of the servants here?"

"Not at all, as they are all English or Scotch. This is an old mansion, and there must be some secret passage leading out of it unknown to Dalbert."

"There must be, my lord, but I will look to it. Does the young lady yet know that she is to be taken to England?"

"Dalbert is with her now and keeping watch over her as her maid is packing her trunk. He will not leave her for a moment until she is handed into the carriage to me. Then we will laugh at the blasted Yankee and his friends."

"All right, sir. I will be on the alert for the rascals."

The mysterious man then turned away as he muttered to himself:

"Heartless wretch, you deserve the fate in store for you. What a fine specimen of the English hounds who feed on the life-blood of my native land!"

Great was Blanche's surprise and indignation when her father appeared at the door of her bedroom again, saying:

"My dear Blanche, I have just received news which compels us to leave for London at once. Call your maid and have a trunk or two packed on the instant."

Being fully aware of the object of the sudden movement, Blanche recovered her self-possession and replied:

"I cannot get ready before morning, father, as I have——"

"And I have to tell you, girl," interposed the stern man, "that you must. To be plain with you, I will not give you a chance of eloping with that young Yankee. Pack up, and I'll keep watch."

Blanche saw that resistance was out of the question at the moment, as she knew that her stubborn father was unbending when once aroused to action.

Calling on her maid, the young girl set about packing a trunk, while her grim father stood near her, as he muttered aloud, in a moody manner:

"If they can take her away from us now, with the guards in every hall, I will say that the Wild Bull is a fiend in earnest. If he appears, I will shoot him on the instant, the infernal hound!"

And the determined man placed his hand on the revolver kept ready for use.

Detective Logan was the most active person in Primrose Hall that night, as he kept moving through the hallways and on the landings, with his eyes and ears on the alert, now and then disappearing for a time in some of the dark passages on the upper stories.

While Blanche was preparing for the journey, she would turn her eyes on the door now and again, as she muttered:

"Is it possible that my friends will permit them to take me away to England, to be at the mercy of the wretch? I cannot believe it. They must give me the signal soon, as they cannot be ignorant of what is going on here now."

While thus on the alert, Blanche saw Detective Logan at the door, with his hand pointed upward, as he said:

"Mr. Dalbert, Lord Longdale wishes to see you for a moment."

Blanche's father turned on hearing the voice, and replied:

"I will be with him in a moment, Mr. Logan. Who put out that lamp? Guard the door, and let no one out. A light out there, guards, and let no one pass down for the present."

A little confusion ensued until another light was procured. Then Dalbert stared around the bedroom, exclaiming:

"Gracious me, where is my daughter?"

Logan was still standing at the door as he responded:

"The young lady must be in the room, sir, as she has not passed out here."

Lord Longdale appeared at the door at the moment, crying:

"What is the row here, Logan? That infernal Jew is not to be found."

"And I fear my daughter has disappeared with him," groaned Dalbert, as he glared at the maid, who was no other than Nellie O'Leary. "What has become of your mistress, girl?"

"How do I know, sir. Sure, she was here by me when the lights went out."

Lord Longdale stamped with rage as he stared at Nellie and asked:

"How long has that girl been here?"

"I was engaged yesterday, sir," answered Nellie, "but I didn't bargain to go to England with Miss Blanche, and——"

"Bother!" cried the lord, turning to Dalbert. "That girl is a spy. Search for your daughter ere she is off with the Wild Bull again."

Another scene of excitement then ensued in the house, while on the lawn outside mounted soldiers galloped to and fro around the place, to guard against the escape of the young girl.

All through the useless search for Blanche and the Jew, Detective Logan kept close to Lord Longdale, while he remarked:

"Well, my lord, I can now imagine that I may rank as a full private in the detective force, I trust?"

"Confound you, but why didn't you tell me to have the rascally Jew arrested before? You think she is with him now, Logan?"

"I am certain of it, my lord. And I begin to suspect more than that."

"What do you suspect, confound you?"

"I would not be at all surprised if the Jew turned out to be no other than the young Yankee himself."

"The deuce you say! Nonsense! He couldn't do me that way."

"We will see, my lord. What is that stir out on the lawn?"

Loud shouts arose on the lawn at the moment, and the men sprang out through the front door as fast as possible, while the excited lord exclaimed:

"Hang my eyes, if I don't bet it is the Wild Bull off on his horse with the girl again. There he goes!"

CHAPTER XIII.

OVER THE HILLS AGAIN.

The Wild Bull was on his black steed again, and Blanche was a willing prisoner in his arms, as the swift animal darted to and fro on the lawn, with several mounted police in pursuit.

The young girl cast several anxious glances at their pursuers ere she said:

"Oh, dear me, Percy, why don't you ride away now?"

"In a moment, darling. I only wait to see him on his horse. Have no fear, as they cannot catch us. Ah! he is darting out now, and we are away."

Facing the horse down the lawn at full speed, they rode straight for the woods, as Percy continued:

"Now for a gallant ride to the mountain, my dear."

When Lord Longdale saw the Wild Bull on the lawn with his intended, he ran toward the stable, crying:

"Out with your swiftest horses! Mount and away with us, Logan. Hang me if I don't heed your advice hereafter."

"Very well, my lord. I am glad to know that I am promoted in your esteem. This horse will suit me."

As the pretended detective spoke he sprang upon a rough-looking animal that was standing ready for use in a corner of the stable-yard, and he was out in chase before his employer.

Dashing out on the lawn, the detective rode straight at the fugitives as he yelled out at the top of his voice:

"Why don't you spread around them, officers, and hem them in? Aha!—by George! they are for the road now. Spur on after them as fast as you can, or they will ride up to the mountain."

The pursuers did spur with all their might, but they could not gain an inch on the fugitives until they reached the road leading up to the mountain.

Longdale's detective was the first in the chase, to the great surprise of the policemen, who were inclined to laugh at the appearance of the shaggy beast under him, as he rode along near them before passing swiftly to the front.

Up the mountain road leading to the little shebeen-house flew the black steed with his double load, and on close after them galloped the rough brown horse at a wonderful gait.

Lord Longdale and Claude Dalbert were soon up with the police, as they were both mounted on very fleet hunters, and when they saw Logan keeping well ahead on the rough-looking horse, the former turned to his friend, crying:

"The deuce take it, Dalbert, but Logan chanced on the fastest animal in the stable, if he is a cart-horse."

"I don't remember the brute, my lord; but I must see to him after this, as he is a splendid traveler. We do not seem to gain on the wild rider above."

"Don't force the horses too soon, as the road is a long one. Dalbert, do you know that I am puzzled about this Logan?"

"How is that, my lord? Did he not come well recommended from Scotland Yard?"

"Very true; yet I fancy the fellow was guying me a little to-night; and he seems to know too much."

"What can you suspect?"

"Oh, I am prepared to suspect and believe anything after to-night. Are you certain that this Leon Levi is what he pretends to be?"

"I received a letter through him from my bankers in London, in which he is highly recommended as their trusted agent."

"But you never saw the fellow before?"

"Never, my lord."

"Then, by George, Dalbert, I begin to think we are dished all around. I have even doubts of my detective."

"That is impossible, my lord; and I fear you are getting too suspicious. It will be my turn next, I fear."

"Not it. I am certain of you, at all risk, as you will be as certain of the gallows if you attempt to trick me."

"It is ungenerous of you——"

"Come, Dalbert, stow that stuff. I am not generous, and I don't pretend to be, by any means. I am a bulldog for stubbornness, though, as these rascals will find out in the end. Ride on faster now, and I will have a go at Logan."

The horses were pressed on at a greater speed, but Logan kept his lead without apparent effort on the part of the brown horse, and he only pulled up when he heard Lord Longdale calling on him.

They were about a mile from the shebeen when Longdale and Dalbert rode up beside the London detective, the former crying:

"How in the mischief did you hit on that fast brute, Logan?"

"I found him in the stable-yard, my lord, as you saw."

Dalbert was looking carefully at the animal, as he remarked:

"I'll swear that he was never in my stable-yard before, as I should know the ugly brute among a hundred."

"Wherever he came from, he is a good one," said Logan.

"I presume he must belong to the police officers. What has become of the fugitives now, my lord?"

They all turned their eyes up the steep road, and Lord Longdale cried:

"I'll bet my life they went into the cabin above here. Now we'll catch the Beauty and her Beast."

"Had we not better pull up a little for the officers, my lord?" asked Dalbert. "The outlaw has friends up here."

"I know he has, as it was in that hut your daughter's new maid lived. We are enough for the rascals. Push on, and the police will soon be up with us."

Before the three horsemen reached the shebeen, a party of six troopers galloped down to meet them, and among them was an old acquaintance.

They all drew up in front of the cabin as Corporal Wildfellow cried out:

"Who comes there?"

"Friends," answered Longdale. "Ha, Corporal Wildfellow, there you are, and fully recovered from the Wild Bull's blows, I trust. We are after the savage now."

The corporal knew Lord Longdale in his proper character, and he replied:

"I am fully recovered, my lord, and I am riding in search of the Irish savage, as I have sworn to crush him. Did you say he was around here now?"

The lord drew the corporal aside and gave an account of the adventure, adding:

"Although we cannot see any place for a stable around, corporal, there must be one hidden in the rocks near the cottage. Make a thorough search with your men while we overhaul the old hut."

The police rode up just as Mrs. O'Leary opened the door at the summons given by Claude Dalbert, who was a magistrate.

"What do you want with me now, gentlemen?" she asked in calm tones.

"I want my daughter, woman."

"I know nothing of your daughter, Mr. Dalbert, only that Nellie went down to serve your daughter against my consent. After the way you treated us last year I——"

"We are not here now to hear your complaints, woman," interrupted the harsh landlord. "We must in and search the place."

"Of course you must come in, if you say so, sir, but it is little welcome you will find under my roof."

At that moment Longdale had drawn the sergeant of police aside, and he was whispering to him, saying:

"Does that horse belong to your party?"

"You mean the ugly brute that led the chase up the hill, my lord?"

"Not so loud. Yes."

"We never saw the animal until he dashed past us to-night, my lord."

"Then keep your eye on the rider, who is called Logan, and pass the quiet word to seize him the moment I call on you. I think he is a rebel spy."

"Very well, my lord."

On entering the cabin with the police, Logan gave orders for searching the place in the most thorough manner, and as he moved about Longdale muttered to himself:

"Hang me if I can make that fellow out. At one moment I regard him as an honest, able officer, and the next instant I find myself regarding him with the strongest suspicion. He'll bear watching, however, whatever he is."

The pretended detective felt that he was watched, and he chuckled to himself, and muttered:

"Longdale is pretty keen, but I'll humbug him yet. Were it not for Blanche, I would settle with him at once. We must get over the hills, even if we have to ride in the face of them."

Mrs. O'Leary watched her unwelcome guests as they poked around her little home in search of secret hiding-places, and

once or twice, when her eye caught that of the mysterious detective, she gave a sigh as she said to herself:

"What can he be doing here with the villains at all? May I never see Heaven if he isn't the most wonderful gentleman that ever stood in Ireland."

The search proved fruitless.

The police officers could not find a secret hiding-place inside the cabin, and Corporal Wildfellow was equally unfortunate in his endeavors outside.

Leaving the cabin with the police, Lord Longdale turned to Logan, saying:

"What do you make of the case now, Logan? They must be hiding around here somewhere, and the corporal's party rode down against us in time."

The pretended detective was standing beside his ugly horse at the moment, and he looked up the steep hillside ere he ventured to reply:

"I cannot imagine where they are, my lord, unless they rode up there."

"Nonsense, man. Even that ugly brute of yours would not do that. By the way, Logan, the police declare that the horse does not belong to their party."

"Then he must have strayed into the yard, my lord. Ha! who is up there?"

"It is the Wild Bull!" yelled Lord Longdale, "and he has the girl!"

"And I will keep her, my lord," yelled the rude figure on the black steed, as they stood on the rock at the top of the steep hill. "You did not keep your pledge in the first test, but I have won the prize. I am Percy Green."

"Up after them," yelled Longdale, as he spurred his horse up the hill, followed by Dalbert and Logan.

The mounted police attempted to follow them up the steep path, but their horses could not bear them, and they were compelled to dismount in pursuit.

The trained hunters under Longdale and Dalbert kept on up the steep, however, their riders spurring them forward in a furious manner, while the former cried to his detective:

"That horse of yours climbs like a goat, Logan."

"He must be a mountain horse, my lord, by his appearance. I see the savage above has disappeared."

"He is dashing over the mountain, but you can catch him on that steed, if you will, Logan,"

"I'll do it, my lord."

"Hold up when you reach the top, and I will change steeds with you, as I want to deal with the rascal first."

"I'll do it, my lord," was the loud response from Logan.

And he then chuckled to himself as he muttered:

"With a vengeance."

CHAPTER XIV.

WHO WAS THE REAL WILD BULL?

Detective Logan, on his ugly brown horse, was the first to reach the rock on which Percy Green had declared himself, while holding Blanche before him on the powerful black steed.

Lord Longdale was not far behind at the moment, and he cried out:

"Hold up there, Logan, as I want to try the mettle of that horse."

Logan did pull up on the rock, and he wheeled the horse around as he replied, in somewhat impatient tones:

"Are you certain that you can ride the animal, my lord?"

"What a question! I'd like to see the horse I couldn't ride. Dismount and let me on him, confound you!"

The speaker had then gained the top of the rock on the hunter, and Dalbert was not far behind.

Springing from the saddle with great activity, Logan cried: "There you are, my lord. I found the brute very hard to manage."

As Lord Longdale was in the act of mounting the brown horse he cast his eyes over the rugged plain beyond, and then exclaimed:

"There they go, and now we will join in the chase with a vengeance. Keep as near as you can, Logan, as that hunter is a good one."

Logan sprang on the hunter's back as he responded:

"Keep a tight hand on that fellow, my lord, as he is an ugly brute. We are after you in full cry."

Lord Longdale urged on the ugly brute, and away they went over the rugged plain, Logan and Dalbert riding together close behind.

They could see the black steed with its double load galloping away over the mountain-top, while Percy Green kept shouting back in loud tones:

"Come on, my lord, and win the first test, if you dare."

"Hang the fellow," cried Longdale, as he looked back for the police, "he is acting as if he wanted to lead us into a trap of some kind. What think you?"

The question was addressed to Logan, who promptly answered:

"There are three of us, my lord, and I trust you are both armed."

"Of course we are. Why, this brute is as gentle as a lamb, Logan."

"He shies like fury, my lord. Look sharp to him as you pass the white rock beyond there."

"You seem to know his tricks well, Logan, for so slight acquaintance."

"A good rider does not need to ride a day, my lord, to know the animal under him. Press on now, as the ground appears to be more even."

Lord Longdale did force the ugly horse along at a swift gallop, but Logan's hunter kept well up with him.

Dalbert fell behind a good deal, as he was too nervous to rush his horse over the rough hill-top.

Before they had proceeded very far in that order the hunter under Dalbert stumbled and fell heavily, throwing his rider over his head.

As the unlucky landlord was flung forward a cry of alarm burst from him, and Logan turned in his saddle, crying:

"Mr. Dalbert has got a bad fall, I think, my lord."

"To the mischief with him, and the police can see to him. We are gaining on the rascal ahead. Press on with me, Logan, and we'll have the infernal Yankee."

"On it is, my lord. I see that Mr. Dalbert is up again, but the horse is still down. The police officers are with him."

"They had better follow us as fast as they can, but we can manage the Yankee without them. Press on, Logan."

They had now crossed the mountain-top, and Lord Longdale urged on the ugly brute as he saw that the fugitives were descending on the other side.

Logan urged on the hunter at the same time as he said to himself:

"The heartless rascal is ready for cruel work if I don't stop him. Brown Billy is too much for Black Dan with his heavy weight. We'll give him a fall below."

Before riding down the mountain path Logan cast a glance back, and he perceived that those on foot had given up the pursuit as a hopeless task, while he muttered to himself:

"I trust that Brown Billy will not kill the rascal, as it is not my purpose to end his career in that fashion."

The brown horse was plunging down the hill at the time with fearful strides, and he was gaining on the black steed ahead at a rate that would soon bring the rivals in collision.

Percy Green was as reckless a rider as ever rode over an

Irish stone wall, but he dared not put the black horse to his best while encumbered with the precious burden before him.

As Blanche stared back and saw that the desperate rider behind was gaining on them, she exclaimed:

"Oh, Percy, he will be on us, and you will have to fight, I fear."

"That would be little trouble if you were not present, my darling. What can our friend mean by changing horses?"

"Hold up, there, you infernal Yankee rascal!" yelled his rival, as the brown horse thundered on after them. "Halt and fight, or I'll send a ball through your cowardly back. Halt, coward!"

Percy Green was about to accept the insulting challenge, and he was already in the act of drawing in the black steed, when a shrill whistle rang out over the mountainside.

Blanche was staring back at their pursuer at the moment, and a cry of alarm burst from her ere she gasped forth, in tremulous tones:

"He is killed, Percy! The horse has flung him on his head!"

The young American drew up on the instant, and he beheld Lord Longdale lying senseless on the path behind them, while the brown horse was galloping up the mountainside toward another horse, and neighing merrily the while, as if proud of his last achievement.

Riding back to where his rival had fallen, the young man encountered Logan and the two horses, the brown brute running joyously by the side of his master.

The mysterious rider sprang from his saddle on the instant and bent down over the fallen man as he cried:

"I warned him that the horse was a tricky brute, but he would ride him for all that. Keep your saddle, sir, and I will see to him. He is only a little stunned, I think, and I am glad of it."

The insensible man held a revolver clasped in his right hand as he lay stretched on the ground, and Logan secured the weapon as he remarked:

"We'll put this out of harm's way. Thank fortune he is not dead, as I am not done with him yet by any means. Ah! he has another of the playthings."

And Logan drew another revolver out of the lord's pocket, while Blanche shuddered a little, as she remarked:

"He meant to kill you, Percy."

"No doubt of it, my dear. What will you do with him, sir?"

Logan then cast his eyes down the mountainside, and he saw a party of horsemen galloping up toward them.

Blanche was still seated on the black horse with Percy, and she perceived the strangers at the same moment, as she cried in startled tones:

"Oh, Percy, the horse soldiers are riding up to take us!"

"Don't be alarmed, Blanche," said Logan, drawing a small whistle from his pocket and sending forth a shrill cry.

A response from those below was heard soon after, and the pretended detective then cried, in merry tones:

"My brave boys are coming, and they will take care of this fellow. Now let us see if we are safe from above."

One glance up the mountain was enough for the outlaw, and he turned to Percy Green as he said:

"All is well so far, and I think you have won the first test. Ride on to the rendezvous below with your charge, and we will follow you soon. Give the signal to the boys as you pass down."

"All right, sir," cried Percy, as he rode away with his promised bride. "Will you give him a chance for the other tests?"

"We will see, friend."

When the mounted outlaws reached the fallen man their leader gave them a few instructions for his disposal, and then sprang on his ugly horse again, as he continued to address his men, saying:

"The fellow would swap horses, but he came to grief. If he

should recover before you get to the cave, see that you all wear your masks. Take care of that hunter, as he is a splendid fellow."

The outlaws placed their insensible prisoner on the hunter, and the party then hastened down the mountain.

When Lord Longdale opened his eyes again he found himself lying on a rude bed in a gloomy apartment, in which only a single lamp was burning.

After staring around for some minutes, while endeavoring to collect his thoughts at the same time, the prisoner raised his voice at length, crying:

"Where in the deuce am I?"

"You're in limbo, my lord," answered a hoarse voice, as the Wild Bull appeared before him in his full outlandish costume.

The prisoner raised himself on his elbow and stared at the strange figure before him as he rejoined:

"Gad, but you do resemble an inmate of the lower regions. Come, now, have I to deal with the real Wild Bull or not?"

"You have to deal with the man who originally assumed that character, my lord, and no mistake."

"How am I to know that I am not dealing with that infernal young Yankee, I'd like to know?"

"The young Yankee is far better engaged at present. He has won the first test, and he will soon wed his bride."

"The deuce he has! Well, I don't give up until I am certain he has married the young lady. Has he now?"

"Not yet, but he will to-night, my lord, I can assure you."

"To-night, you say? What time of the night is it now?"

"It is morning. You have been sleeping all night, my lord."

"The mischief I have! Well, Mr. Allman, I suppose I am in your power again, but what has become of Logan?"

"I am Detective Logan, sir."

"Hang me if I didn't suspect as much, just before that confounded brute wheeled suddenly and flung me. Well, you are a deep one, to do me so readily."

"I warned you that I would be even with you if you did not play fair. Let that pass, however, as you have lost the first trick of the game. Let us to the second part of the play."

"But I don't give up that I have lost the first part of the game at all, as you admit that Miss Dalbert is not yet wedded to the infernal young Yankee. By the way, was he really the Jew also?"

"He was, my lord."

"Hang me if I haven't been dished all around, then; but I don't give up. What do you mean to do with me?"

"I mean to release you as soon as the marriage ceremony is performed, providing you will give me full surety of playing fair with your adversary hereafter."

"Did I not play fair with him?"

"Not much! Did you not tell General Buller that he was an American dynamiter, and incite him to clap him in prison? My lord, I saw all your tricks."

"Yes, confound you, you were a little too clever; but hang me if you could catch me napping again. And I now tell you that I will not give up the young lady."

"But how can you help yourself, my lord, when you are my prisoner?"

"That is my affair. You have the lead on me now, but let us see if you can keep it. 'Tis true I am in your power, but I will not give in an inch. Put me to death, if you please, but you can't browbeat me into the slightest submission."

The disguised man folded his arms on his breast and looked down at his prisoner with stern eyes, as he said, in solemn tones:

"Lord Longdale, I admire pluck and I am not given to bloodshed. You are full bent, I see, on pursuing your course as regards Claude Dalbert's daughter and his estate here in Kerry."

"I am, sir. That girl will be my wife, and the property will be mine also, or I will go under like a torch flung into the water. I stand by the sworn agreement to the bitter end."

"Well, my lord, if that is your stubborn decision, you must go your way. I have a purpose also, and it is directly opposed to yours. Blanche Dalbert will never be your wife, and her father's property must fall into the hands of one who has some regard for his fellow-beings. As you defy me, we will fight the battle out without quarter after this hour."

"I'll fight it out with you, whoever you are, to the deadly end, and that agreement with the young Yankee holds good also. Now, what are you going to do with me?"

"You will be a free man within an hour, sir, and then you can get to work against us as you please. But I will give you one warning ere we part."

"What is it?"

"Every man in your position in life has a dread secret, and you have one that will help to crush you."

"The mischief you say!" cried the lord, in some alarm. "Tush! you cannot discover any of my secrets."

"Don't be too sure of that. I have an agent now at work in London on your case, and I expect to hear important news from him at any moment. Now you can go ahead as you please, but in the end you will wish that you had never met the Wild Bull of Kerry."

A sneering smile appeared on the face of the bold lord as he replied:

"While hunting for evidence against me, why not seek to solve the mystery of the crime committed by Claude Dalbert some years ago? That is, if you are his friend."

"All in good time, my lord. Claude Dalbert may soon be called upon to answer for his crime in another world, as he received very serious injuries in falling from his horse last night."

"The mischief you say! Confound it all, he must not die, as he is too useful to me at present."

CHAPTER XV.

A SETBACK FOR THE WILD BULL.

Late in the evening of the same day Percy Green was seated in the main room of the mountain shebeen, and the bearded stranger was resting his head on the table before him.

"This is rather a bad setback to us, sir," said the young American, with a weary sigh; "but I trust we can get over it."

The bearded stranger raised his head and looked wistfully at the young man as he rejoined:

"Yes, I trust we can get over it, but the unfortunate accident has marred my plans a good deal."

"Yet we can't blame Miss Blanche for going to her father at such a time."

"Of course not; but I fear the rascal will take advantage of her presence at the bedside of her dying father."

"I hope not, sir; and she has a mind of her own, you know."

"What will her opposition amount to as against the wiles of such a rascal and the pleadings of a dying father?"

"But I did understand you to say that Mr. Dalbert may not die for some time yet, and they will not dare force her into a marriage at such a time."

"He may not die, as the doctors say, for some weeks, or months even, but he will never be himself again," answered the bearded man, with a deep sigh.

"But you fear that they will force her into this hateful marriage, sir?"

"I do, if we cannot aid her in resisting them, and that is very difficult now, as every hallway in the old mansion is guarded by policemen."

"Could we not get to her assistance in disguise again?" asked Percy, in the most earnest manner. "I am willing to risk my life in the undertaking."

"I was thinking of that, but you must remember that Longdale is fully on his guard now, and that Blanche is watched, and surrounded by his spies. He even sent Nellie O'Leary away from the house. I almost regret that I let the fellow go at all."

"I suppose you were too chivalrous with him, sir, but you say that it is a part of your plan to avoid bloodshed as much as possible."

"And so it is, young friend. If we were once engaged in open war with the English enemy, I would strike and slay as best we could, as they do not deserve any mercy at our hands."

"Some people contend that the Irish are always at war with the English government, sir, and I think they are."

"So they are, in a measure. But it is sometimes wiser to hold the people in check, especially when they are at the mercy of their armed enemies. We will not talk on politics now, however, and we must face matters as we find them."

"What would you advise, sir?"

"Well, I regret that Blanche did not wed you before returning to the bedside of her dying father, but that cannot be helped now. If Claude Dalbert dies, the estate will be on the market, and you must purchase it through your bankers."

"I am fully prepared for the purchase, sir."

"All we have to fear then is that they will compel Blanche to marry Lord Longdale in spite of herself. Besides, you may be certain that they will take every measure possible for our arrest, as the whole army of police and soldiers are on our track at present."

"I know that, sir; but we may laugh at them all were it not that they hinder us from visiting Primrose Hall by the secret passage leading out to the park. Do you fear arrest up here?"

"Not I, unless they should steal on us in disguise, and that will be difficult, with our friends on the watch. Who have we here now, I wonder?"

The last words were uttered in whispered tones, as two men in the garb of peasants entered the shebeen.

Percy and his unknown friend were also disguised as rough mountaineers, and with their old felt hats pulled down over their foreheads almost to their eyes.

The new-comers were strapping fellows of tall stature, with reddish beards and shaggy mops of hair, and each carried a small bundle of clothes swung on blackthorns over their shoulders.

Percy and his friend appeared to be deeply engaged with peters of porter as Mrs. O'Leary stepped forward to greet the strangers, saying:

"Well, friends, what can I do for you?"

The two men laid their bundles on the floor as one of them answered:

"Could we have something to ate and drink, ma'am, as we are after a very long journey, to be sure?"

"You can have some bread and cheese and porter, good men, but we have no room to lodge you here for the night."

"Faith, ma'am, 'tis the food and the drink will be welcome to us. How long is it to Killarney town now at all?"

"A trifle over four miles."

The two men were soon seated at a small table, while the woman of the house placed the refreshments before them, as she remarked:

"You are strangers about here, I should say, my good men?"

"That we are, ma'am. We're from the west of Cork, and on the way to Killarney to take employment with Lord Kinmare."

"Oh, indeed! I heard the lord was bringing people here to work for him."

"Yes, ma'am, and there's some seven or eight more of us following on after us be twos and threes."

"But why didn't ye all travel together, me good men?"

"Because we were cautioned against it, ma'am, for fear the peelers would take us for moonlighters, ye know."

"I see, indeed. And how far apart are ye keeping on the road?"

"About a couple of miles or so, ma'am; and I shouldn't wonder if a couple more of the boys was passing along afore we're done with the good bread and cheese afore us now. Have at it, Dan."

The two men set to work on the food with great gusto, while Percy whispered to his friend, saying:

"The poor fellows seem to be very hungry, and it would be a charity to treat them to some more porter."

"Wait until I speak to them first," answered the bearded man, with a warning glance at his young friend.

Then, raising his voice, he addressed the strangers in the Irish tongue, saying:

"Good night to you, good friends. How are all the boys in the nest of Cork?"

The man who had spoken to Mrs. O'Leary promptly answered in the same tongue:

"Good night, and welcome, dear man. In truth the boys at home are in a poor way, as the landlords are as hard-hearted as ever to us down there—bad luck to them."

"Then why do you come here to work for one of the worst landlords in Ireland?"

"A man must work and live somewhere, dear man, and there's none of us have enough to take us to the good land of plenty over the ocean at all."

"May I ask your names?"

"We are all Ross Carberry Donovans, good man, and as true as steel to the land that bore us, for all we are forced to work for a tyrant landlord."

"Then you'll be welcome to take some more porter with us, good men," said the bearded stranger, making a sign to the woman of the house.

"More power to ye, friends," answered the red-bearded stranger, still speaking in the Irish tongue. "Blood alive, boys, are you up with us so soon?"

The last words were addressed to two other rough-looking peasants who entered the shebeen at the moment.

Nellie O'Leary glided into the room at the same time, and as she swept past Percy on her way to the inner room she bent her head to him as she whispered:

"Beware!"

Before Percy and his friend could be well on their guard one of the strangers sprang at them while they were yet seated and presented a revolver at each of their heads, as he cried:

"We arrest you in the name of the law, rascals. Surround them, officers, and shoot them down if they attempt to resist. If I am not mistaken we've got the Wild Bull of Kerry and his Yankee friend."

And Lord Longdale burst out into a sarcastic fit of laughter, while five disguised police officers rushed on the two friends.

Percy was about to offer a desperate resistance, when his mysterious friend made a sign to him that a struggle would be of no avail at the moment.

Tearing the false beard from the young American's face, while the policeman placed handcuffs on his wrists, the jubilant lord yelled forth:

"I have won all the points in the game, you confounded Yankee, and I'll soon have the pleasure of seeing you shoot yourself. Pull off that rebel's disguise!"

The bearded stranger was also seized and handcuffed, but when one of the officers tugged at his black whiskers he found that they were of natural growth.

Speaking in firm and hoarse tones, the mysterious stranger turned on Lord Longdale, as he remarked:

"You say you have won all the tests of the game, my lord?"

"No doubt of it, Mr. Wild Bull. The young lady is pledged to be my wife, Claude Dalbert has consented to sell me his estate, and you are my prisoner. That Yankee friend of yours

will afford me great pleasure by blowing out his brains as soon as he gets an opportunity."

The clatter of horses' hoofs were then heard outside the cottage, and General Buller strode into the room soon after, saying:

"And so you have succeeded in arresting the Wild Bull of Kerry, my lord?"

"There he is, general, and without his hide. Of course you will recognize Mr. Percy Green, his American accomplice?"

A quaint smile passed over the face of the mysterious stranger as he turned to the English general, saying:

"This amateur detective, General Buller, is a little out of his reckoning. To use an Irish expression, I think he has put his foot in it. Who is prepared to swear that I am the person known as the Wild Bull of Kerry?"

"What nonsense!" cried Lord Longdale, with a grim smile. "We will soon find the horrid disguise in this nest of rebels."

A wild shout was heard from the hill above the cottage at the moment, and General Buller ran out, crying:

"What is this uproar about?"

"There goes the Wild Bull, general," cried Corporal Wildfellow, pointing to the well-known figure on the black horse, as they stood on the rock above.

CHAPTER XVI.

MORE PRANKS BY THE WILD BULL.

Lord Longdale ran out after General Buller, as he cried to the officers:

"Bring the prisoners out here."

General Buller was still staring up at the uncouth figure on the black steed, while he ordered the soldiers to hold their fire for the present.

A moment after, and the wild rider on the rock waved a flaming torch to and fro as he yelled out:

"Come and take the Wild Bull, if you dare. What fools you were to take the stranger below for me."

Lord Longdale turned and stared at the black-bearded prisoner, as he cried:

"What infernal trick is this? I could swear that we had the rascal here."

"Your lordship is accustomed to make random charges," said the mysterious stranger. "I trust General Buller will see that justice is done us."

"Why are you here in that costume, sir?" asked the blunt general.

"Have I not as much right to wear the garb of a peasant as Lord Longdale, general? Perhaps I am acting as an amateur detective also, for all you know."

"Nonsense! 'Tis an infernal trick, general," cried the puzzled lord. "Give that rascal above a volley and bring him down, and then the trick may be exposed."

"Hold your fire, men," cried the general, as he placed a whistle to his mouth and then blew a loud, shrill cry.

The signal was soon answered from the mountain above, while the wild rider on the rock ceased waving the torch as he turned to gaze beyond him.

"We've trapped the fellow now," cried the general, "as I placed a troop of horse back on the mountain this evening. Aha! he is surprised and bewildered."

The wild rider on the rock did seem to be surprised for the time by the appearance of a troop of horse galloping toward him on the top of the mountain and thereby cutting off his retreat, while General Buller sang out:

"Dismount and up at the fellow, men, but do not slay him or the horse. We'll soon see who he is."

"I'll up with the men," cried Lord Longdale, "as I am pledged to capture the Wild Bull of Kerry, whoever he is."

"And I will have another bout with the rascal," cried Corporal Wildfellow, as he led the way up the steep ascent.

General Buller cast one more glance up at the wild rider, and he then turned to the mysterious prisoner, saying:

"Your friend is hemmed in at last, and he cannot escape."

"Perhaps not, general," was the quiet response; "but you assume too much when you say he is a friend of mine."

"Whoever you are, sir, you must confess that you were taken under very suspicious circumstances and in bad company."

"If you allude to me, General Buller," said Percy Green, in dignified tones, "I would beg to inform you that I can answer for my actions, and that I will not receive insult even from you."

"Very well, sir. I had no intention of insulting an unfortunate man. Yet you must confess that your late actions were not in keeping with your character as an honest reporter for the press."

"My actions will be better judged hereafter, General Buller. Ha! the Wild Bull is at his pranks again."

All eyes were again turned up to the huge rock, where the wild rider was still waving his torch, as if in defiance; but at that moment he hurled the brand down at Lord Longdale, as he yelled, in hoarse and fierce tones:

"You will never take the Wild Bull, you English hound!"

The burning torch struck the ambitious lord in the breast, and he fell on the side of the hill, only to roll down again, as he yelled:

"Shoot the infernal dog!"

"Don't fire on him, men!" thundered out the general. "Shame on you all, if you cannot capture one horseman."

As if encouraged by the order of the English general, the daring horseman faced the black steed down the steep hill, drawing his heavy club and waving it aloft as he yelled aloud:

"I defy all the troops in Ireland to take me alive! Clear the way for the Wild Bull of Kerry!"

And right down at the soldiers he rode, using his club with good effect, as he continued to yell:

"Take me, if you can, you villains. The Wild Bull defies you all."

"Up at him, officers, and two of you look to the prisoners," cried General Buller, drawing his sword and dashing up to attack the daring rider. "Knock him from his horse, but do not slay the rascal."

The wild rider had cleared a path through all the soldiers on the hillside, when General Buller and five policemen dashed up to attack him.

With another yell of defiance he rode at the general, knocked the sword from his hand with one swoop of the club, and then burst through the policemen at a rush, as he yelled forth:

"Clear the way for the Wild Bull of Kerry! Down with the peelers!"

The last words were uttered as the bold rider struck at the two officers guarding the prisoners, and as they fell to the ground he cried out to the bearded stranger, speaking in the Irish tongue:

"To the cabin with you and your friends, sir, and you may laugh at the English."

The daring rider then faced his horse up the road at a furious pace as he yelled out his defiance again:

"Hurrah for the Wild Bull of Kerry, and down with the English tyrants!"

"Fire on the rascal! Look to the prisoners!" yelled General Buller, as he ran down the hillside. "Mount and pursue him, as he will be cut off."

The bearded stranger and Percy Green dashed into the cabin as the wild rider galloped away, leaving the two officers lying on the ground.

A scattering volley was then sent after the bold rider, while General Buller sprang on his steed, crying:

"Look to the prisoners in the cabin and let them not escape, my lord. I will ride after the rascal. Mount, mount, men, and away with me. He'll be cut off above."

Without waiting for his troopers, the excited general galloped up the road at a furious pace, while on before him dashed the Wild Bull, sending back his fierce yells of defiance.

Over a dozen of the troopers were soon in their saddles, and Corporal Wildfellow was the first to gallop after his general, as he yelled out:

"Hang me if I don't have another bout with the Irish dog if I have to pursue him until doomsday."

"Guard the cabin, officers, and some of you follow me," cried Lord Longdale, as he drew a revolver and sprang into the shebeen. "Where are the two infernal prisoners, you impertinent girl?"

Nellie O'Leary confronted the excited lord as he ran into the cabin, and there was a saucy smile on the young girl's face as she retorted in merry tones:

"What prisoners, my lord? Sure the Wild Bull is away up the road."

"No nonsense with me, girl, as I know your friends are in here. Out with your weapons, officers, and search the infernal den. If they offer resistance shoot them down like dogs! Girl, I will drag you and your mother to prison at once!"

"You are very kind, my lord," answered Nellie, with another saucy grin. "Maybe you'd think twice before you touch me at all. Search away and be hanged to you. Oh, but didn't you catch the Wild Bull neatly, my brave lord?"

"Silence, girl, or I'll choke you! If you do not show us where the prisoners are hiding I will have you hanged!"

"Oh, you will, indeed? Maybe you'd hang yourself first."

As Nellie spoke she moved to the door and looked out and up the road.

Two of the disguised policemen were standing on guard outside, while all the troopers were riding up the road after the Wild Bull.

"You can't escape, girl," cried Lord Longdale, as he sprang to seize her. "You are my prisoner, and you will be punished."

The active girl darted aside toward the shelf where two candles were burning, and she blew them out on the instant as she cried, in loud and merry tones:

"Now for some fun in the dark. Have at the rogues, boys."

Before the police could make a movement in the dark room a dozen forms sprang out on them and seized them by the arms, while a manly voice cried out:

"Surrender, or you are dead men. Keep quiet and you are safe."

Lord Longdale had a weapon in each hand, and he was about to fire at random in the dark, when they were dashed from his grasp, while the same voice cried out:

"You are baffled again, my lord. The game is not won yet."

The baffled nobleman dashed to the door and sprang over the two policemen outside, who had been felled to the ground, while he yelled out:

"We'll burn the infernal den to the ground ere morning!"

He then dashed down the road as fast as he could, and turned to ascend the steep ascent, as he yelled to the horsemen on the top of the hill:

"Dismount and down to the rescue, soldiers! The rascally rebels are in force down here."

About twenty of the troop sprang from their horses and hastened down the hill to meet the noble fugitive, who was known to be in favor with General Buller.

On leading the armed men back to the cabin, Lord Longdale found the six policemen lying on the floor, with their arms and legs bound with strong cords, and with gags in their mouths.

Nellie O'Leary and her active friends had disappeared, however.

In the meantime, General Buller pushed on after the Wild

Bull as fast as his war steed would bear him, and as he drew near the top of the mountain he sent forth another shrill cry with the whistle, and muttered aloud:

"The daring rascal cannot escape us now, unless he is Old Nick himself. There must be more than one of the rogues playing the part, as no single man ever played all the parts he does."

The general's signal was answered from above just as the wild horseman gained the top of the mountain and disappeared from his sight on the incline beyond.

Urging on his steed, General Buller soon reached the top of the mountain, where he beheld a troop of horsemen riding toward him at full speed, but he could not perceive the wild rider on the black steed, and he exclaimed, as he pointed to a mass of rock to the right on the mountain-top:

"The rascal must be hiding behind there. On with me and we will catch him yet. Fire on the fellow if he attempts flight again."

The huge mass of rock was soon surrounded, and a strict search was made by the troops, but no trace of the Wild Bull could be found.

After the fruitless search General Buller placed a strong guard over the huge pile, and then led another party of troopers back to the cottage on the mountainside, where he found Lord Longdale in an ugly mood.

"Let us set fire to the den, general," suggested the baffled man, "and then we will find the hiding-place of the infernal rebel foxes."

"I will place a strong guard here to watch for them, my lord," was the firm reply, "as I do not imagine that the burning of the cottage would help us to solve the mystery."

Lord Longdale was not satisfied with the proposition, but he felt that it would be useless to argue with the stern soldier, who believed in having his own way in dealing with the Irish rebels.

Corporal Wildfellow was then sent up to the troopers stationed on the hill above the cottage, with orders from the general that they should hold the post until relieved in the morning.

When the gallant corporal reached the huge rock where the Wild Bull had appeared on his black steed, he started back with a cry of alarm, exclaiming:

"Mercy on me, if the infernal rebels haven't played the mischief with the men. They are all slain."

Over twenty of the troopers were lying helpless on the ground beyond the rock, but none of them had received any serious injuries in the silent attack on them.

Calling for aid, the corporal drew back in alarm while he beheld a strong party of mounted men riding away over the mountain at full speed.

General Buller and Lord Longdale hastened up with the troopers around the cottage, and it was then discovered that the helpless men above had been bound and gagged by the moonlighters.

On releasing the men the sergeant in charge of the party exclaimed:

"The blasted girl gave us whisky and goats' milk that dosed us!"

On questioning the man General Buller discovered that Nellie O'Leary had appeared among the troopers on the hill soon after the assault on the police in the cabin, and she bore a pailful of milk and whisky on her head as she addressed them in pleasant tones, saying:

"The rich English lord below sent me up with a treat to you, boys. Drink his health in good milk and whisky."

The men did drink freely, as they were chilled by the mountain air, and not suspecting the least treachery on the part of the merry girl.

When they were all lying helpless on the ground the moon-

lighters stole out from a hiding-place in the rock and secured their arms and the horses.

"We must blow up the cabin in the morning," said General Buller, while Lord Longdale ground his teeth with rage.

Mrs. O'Leary's shebeen was destroyed in the morning, and then an important discovery was made by the soldiers.

The hill behind the cabin was mined for some distance back, and several secret outlets were found above and below.

One of the outlets led to the back of the cottage, another was in a ravine some twenty yards back from the main road, and a third opening was found near the huge rock on the top of the hill.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE WILD BULL'S LAST PRANK.

General Buller instituted a thorough search for Mrs. O'Leary and her merry daughter, feeling assured that they could throw light on the movements of the outlaws, but they could not be found in the neighborhood.

Percy Green and his mysterious friend had also disappeared.

Claude Dalbert was failing fast, and his faithful daughter was a constant attendant at his bedside, while Lord Longdale was a steady visitor at Primrose Hall, which was still guarded by the police and troopers.

Two weeks after the blowing up of the cottage on the mountain the Wild Bull was heard of again, but in another part of the country.

An obnoxious landlord on the borders of Cork was taken from his house one night by a party of masked men, and then forced to sign a document in which his tenants were guaranteed fair play in the future.

The Wild Bull led the party in his outlandish disguise, and he was also mounted on his famous black steed.

Several other "outrages" took place in the same neighborhood, and General Buller hastened to the locality with a large force of mounted men.

The soldiers were withdrawn from Primrose Hall, and only four policemen were left on the premises.

Lord Longdale rode to and fro, accompanied by three private detectives, as he still feared that Percy Green and the stranger would suddenly appear in the neighborhood and make an attempt to baffle him in his projects.

Although Claude Dalbert was dying, he still retained full possession of his senses, and he was stubborn on one point.

Lord Longdale could not get him to sign a bill of sale for the estate, and the dying man also refused to force his fair daughter to wed the man she despised so much.

About ten o'clock one night Lord Longdale hastened from Killarney with his detectives, and he was soon at the bedside of the dying man.

A tall, venerable-looking stranger, with a white beard and flowing locks of the same color, was standing near the bedside with Blanche when the lord entered the apartment and approached the dying man, saying:

"I received your message, Dalbert, and I rode here at once. I trust that you have come to your senses at last."

The dying man spoke in clear and steady tones as he replied:

"I have, my lord. As I will be dead ere morning dawns, I want to settle my business with you at once. What is the total amount of my debt to you?"

"More than you can pay, Dalbert. Who is this person here?"

And Lord Longdale turned and gave a haughty glance at the stranger.

"That is my best friend on earth, my lord," answered the

ying man. "With his aid I am prepared to settle with you. What is the full amount?"

The baffled man glared at the old stranger and then at the black man, ere he exclaimed, in angry tones:

"What infernal trick are you at now, Dalbert? You are not ying at all, but you are trying to humbug me."

Then bending down over the invalid, he whispered:

"You are well enough to be dragged to the gallows yet, Dalbert. None of your infernal tricks with me, or I will denounce you before your daughter!"

A grim smile passed over the face of the dying man as he replied:

"Denounce away, my lord. Blanche is better informed on that affair than you are. Thank goodness, I am not guilty of the crime you allude to. You have kept me in terror too long, and I now defy you to your teeth. Denounce away!"

Lord Longdale was staggered at the defiance for a few moments, and ere he could recover himself the old stranger approached him, saying:

"Lord Longdale, I am prepared to settle with you. I am the agent of the gentleman who has purchased Mr. Dalbert's state. What is the amount due you?"

"Who are you, sir, and how dare you interfere in this affair?" demanded the angry lord, stamping with rage. "If you have purchased this estate it was a fraudulent transaction. That man is a criminal, and I will denounce him."

"Keep cool, my lord," answered the old stranger, "as you are not master here. Claude Dalbert is not a criminal, as I am soon prove to you, for his step-brother is alive to-day. I am the man."

As the stranger spoke he tore the white beard and wig from his head, and presented a clean face to the astonished lord.

The baffled man started back in surprise and stared at the stranger, as he exclaimed:

"It is Percy Dalbert, the outlaw! I could swear that you were killed by your step-brother that night."

"But you see that I was not, my lord, as I am alive now, and am here to baffle you, outlaw though I was."

"And you are an outlaw still. Gad, you cannot baffle me, Percy Dalbert," cried the stubborn lord. "The old charge is still against you, and I will have you arrested at once. My detectives will pounce on you and take you to prison."

As the excited lord spoke he turned to the door, when the uncouth form of the Wild Bull confronted him and presented a pistol at his face as he said:

"Take it easy, my lord, or you will get into serious trouble. The police and your detectives are now in my power, and you are helpless. The Wild Bull of Kerry is master here now."

Lord Longdale drew back and placed his hand on a revolver, when he was seized from behind and disarmed, while Percy Dalbert said to him:

"Your game is blocked, my lord, and you are foiled at all points."

The Wild Bull then advanced to the bedside of the dying man, saying:

"Mr. Dalbert, you have injured me, but I forgive you now." Claude Dalbert started up at the strange figure as he asked in a low voice:

"Who are you, and how have I injured you, I'd like to know?"

The Wild Bull bent down his head and whispered in reply:

"I am Dan O'Leary, the son of Widow O'Leary, whom you loved from our farm a year ago. I am now an outlaw on the hills, but my mother and sister are safe on their way to America, thanks to the good step-brother you wronged long ago."

"Answer me one question, O'Leary," said the dying man in a whisper, "and I swear that I will not betray any one."

"What is it, sir?"

"Didn't my step-brother there sometimes assume your disguise?"

The disguised outlaw chuckled aloud as he replied:

"I can't tell any tales out of school, sir, but I must confess that Mr. Percy is a wonderful man and a true friend of the old cause. Yes, there is more than one Wild Bull on the hills of Kerry. For the sake of your good daughter may you die in peace, sir."

Lord Longdale was foaming with rage when he found himself a prisoner, and he turned on Percy Dalbert, crying:

"You will suffer for this outrage, sir, rebel that you are."

Drawing himself up to his full height, Percy Dalbert replied:

"I was an Irish rebel, and I will be one until my country is free! Listen to me a few minutes, my lord."

"I am compelled to, I suppose."

"You are. As you know, I was the lawful owner of this estate until I was declared an outlaw seven years ago. You also know that I escaped to London at that time, where I met my step-brother here in a lonesome spot on the banks of the Thames."

"Yes, and he tried to murder you that dark night," interposed the lord.

"We did quarrel, my lord, and I fell into the river, but I do not believe he meant to murder me."

"Yet he enjoyed your estate here ever since, as you know."

"Well, I was not sorry for that, as I love his dear daughter, who will now enjoy it in turn. As I was a rebel I could not claim it."

"That is true. When I fell into the river that night," continued Percy Dalbert, "I saved my life by swimming to an American vessel just putting out to sea. I reached New York four weeks after, where I learned that I was also accused of a crime committed here in Kerry. I could clear myself of that crime, but only at the expense of one near to me."

"I was guilty of that crime," said the dying man, "as I have freely confessed."

"Let that pass," said Percy, "as I have more to say. Years ago, while on a visit to America, I married a young lady in New York, who died soon after giving birth to a son. At the earnest request of my wife's mother, I gave my son in charge to her, as he was brought up as one of the family."

"On reaching New York I found my son at college, and a bright, happy fellow he was. He bore the name of his grandfather, and he was to be his heir."

"Then I suppose Mr. Percy Green is your son?" cried Lord Longdale.

"I am proud to say that he is, and he is also the lawful owner of this estate, which he has purchased with a portion of the money left to him by his grandparents. I am also happy to inform you that he is the husband of this dear, good girl, whom he married last night with her father's consent."

"That is true," cried the dying man.

"Confound you all," cried Lord Longdale, "I see that I am dished."

"You are, my lord. Hereafter the tenants on the estate will be treated as human beings, and not as cattle."

"But you cannot live here," cried Lord Longdale. "You are still an outlaw."

"I do not care to live here under the English flag, my lord, as I have a happy home in America. My son will not live here, either, as he is about to take his wife to America, but he will have an agent here to manage his estate."

"I suppose his agent will be that rascal there who has been masquerading as the Wild Bull?" cried the baffled man.

"Go and blow your brains out, my lord," cried the Wild Bull, in hoarse tones, "as you have lost the game, and there are officers from London looking for you."

"Officers from London looking for me!" cried the lord, in startled tones.

The door was burst in at the moment, and Percy Green appeared, followed by three strangers.

Lord Longdale uttered a painful cry as he recognized one of the strangers, and then made a dash at the window, as he yelled:

"The game is up, I see."

The three strangers dashed after the fugitive, while Percy Green cried:

"The fellow has been a fraud for years past, as the real Lord Longdale has just arrived from Africa, where he has been a prisoner for eight years past. That scoundrel is a sharper who met him out at the Cape of Good Hope."

In less than an hour after Claude Dalbert died in his daughter's arms, and the false lord was lying at the bottom of the river, where he perished in attempting to escape from the officers.

* * * * *

The moonlighters are still out on the hills of Kerry, but the Wild Bull is not seen there now.

Percy Green and his bride are living in New York, and Dan O'Leary has charge of the estate in Kerry.

Percy Dalbert lives in New York also, and he is the owner of a splendid black horse imported from England, while in his private museum may be seen the hide and horns of a black bull.

Mrs. O'Leary is housekeeper for the exile, and her merry daughter lives with her.

Whenever Nellie steps into the museum she looks at the bull's hide, and exclaims:

"Faith, I'll never forget the evening the master gave the corporal the drubbing for trying to kiss me. They may talk forever of their brave men, but there's none can compare with the WILD BULL OF KERRY."

THE END.

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